



THE CHURCH – LABORATORY OF SALVATION

IN THE WORK OF PRIEST PHD PROFESSOR ACADEMICIAN

DUMITRU STĂNILOAE

- Small Treaty of Practical Soteriology -

*Painting from cover 1:
col. (r) Gelu Bumb*

“All people are loved into the Son, by the Father and all of them answer into the Son, to the Father, with the love of the Son. This is the culminating moment of the state of salvation: the union of everybody with Christ into the Ghost and through this the feeling of the love of the Father towards them, and theirs towards the Father. That’s why **salvation is recapitulation into Christ**. All people are loved into the Son by the Father and all of them answer with the love of the Son, for, being them into the Son, upon all of them hovers the Ghost of the Father and out of all of them shines to the Father, the Holy Ghost.”

(Dumitru Stăniloae, „Relațiile Treimice și viața Bisericii” (“Trinitarian Relations and the Life of the Church”, *Ortodoxia (Orthodoxy)*, 4 / 1964, p. 517.)

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MARIUS GOLEA

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We dedicate this book

To the Most-Pious Father,

Archimandrite Nestor Iovan,

From the Holy Bodrogu Monastery

We present our humble thanks to the people who, during our pilgrimage on the soul uplifting realms of the theology, were to us, both help and cause:

His Beatitude Daniel,
Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church

His Eminence Archbishop, PhD Timotei Seviciu

His Eminence Bishop, PhD Emilian Crișanul

His Most Pious Archimandrite Nestor Iovan

Priest Univ. Professor PhD Andrew Louth

Priest Major Adrian David

Priest Univ. Prof. PhD. Vasile Vlad

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Priest Univ. Prof. PhD Ioan Tulcan

Priest Univ. Prof. PhD Cristinel Ioja

Priest Univ. Lect. PhD Caius Cuțaru

Priest Univ. Lect. PhD Filip Albu

Priest Univ. Lect. PhD Adrian Murg

Priest Univ. Lect. PhD Ștefan-Barbu Negreanu

Priest Univ. Lect. PhD Lucian Farcașiu

Priest Pavel Brândușă

Most distinguished Lady Lidia Stăniloae

Most distinguished Lady Lavinia Popa

Distinguished gentleman, my friend from ever, Dragoș Ceahoreanu

FOREWORD

Time's passing and the crossroads of the history, and the godlike rationalities hidden in the meanders of the world's evolution, they are in unmediated connection with the vocations placed by God in His Church's sons. Father Dumitru Stăniloae, to whom this volume is dedicated, he was one of the most exquisite sons of God from within Romanian Orthodox Church. More than six decades, he was the *professor* by excellence, amongst the professors who initiated the coming back to the patristic and Byzantine tradition of the hesychasm and of the philokalic Palamas-ism, both in the Romanian theological schools and in the monastic settlements, and, in some measure, also in the life and in the thinking of the clerics and of the laymen. The doctrinal cogitation of Father Stăniloae has accomplished the separation between the scholastic schemes of the Orthodox theology from the 19th Century, and it revived the dogmatic thinking by describing the dogma in structural connection with life, and he identified the full life between the borders of the teaching of faith. He did this firstly in his own life that he covered it and identified it to the Christian truth, and then he made it visible in each theological assertion he wrote or uttered. Being rightly called the *accomplished theologian of the godlike love*, Father Stăniloae fully understood and he preached that authentic life cannot be but theological, and the true theology cannot be but a description in words of the intra-Trinitarian Life and Love, to which the man's freedom is called to participate.

Apostolic and patristic apology of the right-faith, Father Stăniloae's work present *the Faith, the Orthodoxy, the Life, the Salvation, and the Work within world of the Holy Trinity*, is such an organic unity so that they are shown as nuanced ways of approaching the same unique reality. Faith's *pleroma*, in Father Stăniloae's vision, cannot be but the Orthodoxy, and this one, at its turn, cannot be other than the thesaurus of the Church's teaching. Church's faith isn't

besides, neither smaller than life, for it expresses the man's partaking to the Work of the Godlike Trinity, and that's why it is savior, namely it sanctifies and it deifies the life. Any objectifying in rigid concepts, put together in a Nestorian manner, as also any Monophysite diminution of the listed terms (Faith, Orthodoxy, Church, Life, Salvation, the outwards Work of the Holy Trinity), are excluded in Father Stăniloae's theology. The names: *Orthodox Church*, *Christian Church*, *savior Church*, they are so unitary in his thinking, so that putting them next to each other it seems to be quite pleonastic. In the plenary acceptation of the terms, *the Church is only Orthodox* – or it is not the Church – and *it is only Christian*, for only Jesus Christ are the measure and the Revelation of the godlike ones and of the human ones.

With these observations we have already reached the core of the present volume. From the beginning to the end, the author – Marius Golea – analyzes the notion of *Church* on almost all possible sides, as they are seen in the theological work of Father Dumitru Stăniloae. The premise and the conclusion of the debate are the same: *the Church is the union of everything that exists, or it is destined to comprise everything that exists: God and creation. The Church is the fulfillment of the plan of God from ever: the all-unity* (p. 20). The Church *has the attributes of the Son of God* (p. 20), and *the content of the Church consists of Christ, the One united according to the Godlike nature with the Father and with the Ghost, and according to the human nature, with us*. That's why *the Church can be called Christ* (p. 21).

Salvation is not something that comes from outside, a something which will be given only in a future age, but the Life of the Holy Trinity, already given, unmixed, but really and eternally, to the man and to the creation. The Trinitarian mode, the intra-Trinitarian relations, they are the Church's life itself (p. 23-25). The *dogma of the Holy Trinity*, author paraphrases Father Stăniloae, *it stays at the basis of the entire teaching of the Church, and transmitting it wholly, through time*,

it is a capital duty (p. 23). Lacking a just vision on the relations between the Son and the Holy Ghost, as amongst all the Persons of the Holy Trinity, not only that doesn't make salvation possible, but, on the opposite, it impedes it. Unbalanced religious conceptions, which do not take the Church's teaching in its integrality, they lead to straying and heresies (p. 27). Salvation means the possibility of the creature to be partaker to the Life overflowed by the Holy Ghost from the bosom of the Godhead (p. 27), for the Ghost *elevates also us towards God in an increasing understanding and love (p. 27).* The Ghost rests upon and remains within Christ's Church, for Christ is Church's Head, and the Church is His Body. But through this, the Ghost rests upon and shines out of believers, as limbs of the Christ's Church, and thus, through the mediation of the Embodied Son, the believers are imparted with the Holy Ghost, namely the ultimate and the absolute source of the existence, Who is the Father. But this impartation doesn't take place according to the nature, namely as the Son and the Holy Ghost are imparted with the Father, but according to the grace (p. 32).

Conclusion is: the Church isn't only a neutral frame through which one can receive the grace, neither a simple juridical-administrative institution of divine right, but the event of the Kingdom already reached at us, the eternity foretasted in time and history. The Church is the *laboratory* within which the creature is being accustomed with the eternity. As Church, Christ, resurrected and elevated on the right hand of the Father, He comes through the Holy Ghost in believers who are united with Him – themselves become a living church – and He works within them the fire of the love for God and for people, and leads them towards the Kingdom of the Holy Trinity or towards the eternal communion with Him, and this means the deified life, or the salvation (p. 37). We must see the Church, the author paraphrases Father Stăniloae, as a living organism, as a living process, as a living laboratory, within which we are prepared to be saved. The purpose of the life is the salvation, and this takes place within the Church's spiritual laboratory. The Church is the

anticipated Kingdom of God. The Church prepares us towards the consummate mystery in which God will be everything in all things, when all of us will be brought, through Christ's sacrifice, to the eternal consummation of the communion. This process of preparation, as travelling on the way towards salvation, which takes place within Church - for the Church is the all-comprising Mystery -, it is possible for through the Church we receive the Ghost and the Son (p. 45).

The Church, the Mystery of the all-unity between God and creation, it unveils its fundamental purpose: to offer the creature the possibility to participate to the oikonomia of God and to the life-maker Trinitarian community. Within Church, the man accesses the experience of being united with the above nature Life through the *liturgical dimension* of the Ecclesia. Integrated to the ecclesial rhythm, the man's life becomes moving towards deification. Each believer is incorporated through Baptism in the Mysterious Body of the Lord, and he moves himself, by dynamically participating to the Holy Mysteries, towards the fullness of the Christ's holiness.

The third chapter of this synthesis, about how Father Stăniloae approaches the Church in his theological thinking, it presents the Holy Mysteries as a concrete modality through which the work of salvation, done by the Church, it is extended within believers (p. 124-170). The Mysteries imprint within man the Image of the Father (the Embodied Logos) through the Holy Ghost, and they communicate to the human hypostasis the uncreated energies of God, initiating the man in the eternal process of the epektasis (p. 124): *deification rests upon the man, like the Holy Ghost rests within Church. The man becomes a Church of the Godhead* (p. 125). In each Sacrament, the Church mysteriously becomes Life of the man for eternity. Like the Second Person of the Holy Trinity took through Embodiment the whole humanity within Himself and forever, likewise, in the Church's Mysteries, the believer receives the seal of the deification for eternity. But this process isn't an

automatic one, a mechanical one, or a magical one. This process it presupposes man's freedom and work for actualizing the grace or the life received as a gift in the Holy Mysteries. The *likeness* to God it belongs to man's free decision of *church-ing* all the aspects of his earthly life. On the measure the creature opens freely to the kindness and to the love of God, the grace of the Mysteries, or the Life from above nature of the Holy Trinity, it shines fuller within man, as life of the man. The Saints fully live the all-union made available by the Church, for they are limbs irradiated by the love for God, and through them is transparent, for the world, the light of the knowledge of the Holy Trinity. The liturgical ministration, or the religious service of the Holy Mysteries – within which the hypostatical presence of Christ it is connected in a seen manner with the distinct human hypostases – it is unveiled as a movement towards the seen communion with God and with the neighbor. In this sense the Church is *the laboratory of the resurrection*, within which the man is being accustomed to the plenary presence of the Holy Ghost. In the Church's Mystery there cannot be drawn a border line, a separation line, between the man's movement and the work of the Holy Ghost which initiates and sustains the spiritual life within man (p. 126). In the Mystery, the things of the Ghost become the things of the man. On this way, the man receives, through transfer, the power and the work of God for transfiguring and spiritualizing the creation (pp. 128, 130). Therefore, the Holy Mysteries give the man the capacity of acting upon creation in the sense of deifying it. But this power of acting upon creation it can be used by man also for acting upon other people, the human persons being also part of the creation. Behold how the man becomes transmitter of the uncreated energies and co-worker with God. This dignity of the man justifies the man's role of celebrating the Holy Mysteries, within which, through man's work, there works God Himself.

The author of the present book succeeds in noticing the so thin and profound nuances of Father Stăniloae's

thinking, nuances which cover and identify – without any mistake – Christ, the Church, and the Holy Mysteries. Between these ones there is an unmixed identity (p. 130). The believer who is imparted with / by the Holy Mysteries, he becomes himself a living church and a mystery of the untold presence of God within human nature.

The forth chapter of the book approaches the Church's expressing through *cult*, understood as seen works, through which it is actualized, within human nature, the objective salvation (pp. 172-213). The liturgical dimension of the Church makes the unreachable God, the impenetrable One, the non-comprised One, and the untouchable One, to become possible to be participated by man and creation. Through cult, the Church's theology and doctrine, they do not remain simple intellectual speculation, theoretical and abstract, but they become the enlightening, working, and transfiguring presence of the Holy Trinity in the life of the believer (p. 175). The integration in the cultic frame of the Church it means surpassing the scholastic manner of approaching God and of the faith in Him. According to the scholastic schemes, God is isolated in *an inaccessible transcendent*, and the faith doesn't pass beyond the sterile formulations of the philosophical currents. On the opposite end, the ecclesial cult means *God now and here, a modality through which the godlike life becomes possible to be participated in a concrete manner and through sensitive (seen) acts*. Because of this reason *the cult it is the ground itself of the possibility of the Christian life*. In Orthodoxy, the cultic life is not a compartment besides the daily life, but it is the Life without which death would master the creation. *The cult is the manifestation and the epiphany of the unique Life: the Life of God in the created being*. Through cult the believers become living limbs of the Body of Christ or *an organic plurality of souls marching from death towards resurrection* (p. 209-211). The man becomes a living church (the seventh chapter, pp. 214-220), within which rests *the infinity of the Holy Trinity* (p.

214) through Whom *within the Church of our being it is accomplished a unification of all the movements and tendencies of the believer, between themselves and between him and God, and of each human being with other humans into God* (p. 217).

Marius Golea's incursion in the ecclesiological thinking of Father Stăniloae comes to an end with two chapters, within which the author fructifies the perspective of the great theologian analyzed, regarding the salvation by belonging to the communion of love with the mystical limbs of the Body of Christ (pp. 221-225), through the capital importance of the cult dwelling place, within which there is constituted the liturgical Eucharistic Synaxis (pp. 226-234) and, finally, by observing the stages of betterment, or the subjective salvation of each believer.

These introductory considerations to the audacious (but successful one!) attempt of Marius Golea, to systematically present ecclesiological elements from the vast work of the great theologian Dumitru Stăniloae, they must be completed with some biographical and bibliographical data of the author. He is known in the culture's world as one that, easily and in an unhindered manner, moves in the space of the universal values. He graduated "Nicolae Bălcescu" Military School for Active Officers, he is licensed in Economics at West University of Timisoara, he graduated a Master in Management and Financing the Public Administration, and he also graduated a master at "Ilarion Felea" Faculty of Theology from Arad, specialization of Christian Doctrine and Culture. Now he is PhD student at West University of Timisoara, on philology.

Preoccupied with the culture, the author does a thorough, demanding, and daring and difficult work, of translating Romanian Christian Orthodox texts in English language; he has forwarded translation manuscripts to the copyright owners, as there would be: His Beatitude Daniel, Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church (*Theology and Spirituality*), His Eminence Archbishop Timotei Seviciu (*The Light of the Life – Collection of Pastoral Letters*), His eminence

Bishop Emilian Crișanul (*Human Person between Heavens and Earth, and Faith that Sustains the World*), Priest Professor PhD Academician Dumitru Stăniloae (*Jesus Christ or the Man's Restoration*), Priest Professor PhD Vlad Vasile (*Prayer and Imagination - Churchly Perspective*), Priest Professor PhD Ion Bria (*Dictionary of Orthodox Theology*), Hieromonk Arsenie Boca (*The Path of the Kingdom*) etc.

Marius Golea is also author of two dictionaries (*Dictionary of Rhetoric - Non-Exhaustive*, and *Dictionary of Religious Terms* – two editions), and of other 13 books (novels and specialty works on Christian spirituality).

The present volume, *The Church – Laboratory of Salvation in the Work of Priest Professor PhD Academician Dumitru Stăniloae – (Small Treaty of Practical Soteriology)*, it completes the laborious work of Marius Golea on the field of the Romanian theological thinking. In a word, the author captures Father Stăniloae's spirit on such extent, in the present book, so that, though it is a thematic commentary, the passing and the interference between the analyzed text and the text of the commentary come to a full unity.

Priest Professor PhD Vasile VLAD

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Prologue

Is it salvation still possible?

This question isn't a rhetorical one, but the result of our reaction of opposition to the discourse, increasingly reiterate and extended within the Church of Christ, initiated just by the clergy, and taken as a justification of the own sins by the laymen, namely that: "Today there is no longer faith"!

One could analyze this affirmation in many ways, but the gravest result of such analysis would be that of trying to justify, to the ones who utter it, their tendency of "softening the faith". How has one reached at this conclusion, while the churches are overcrowded with people on each Sunday or Holiday, local communities are building new churches and renovating the old ones, and the Romanian Orthodox Church, through sacrificial dedication of His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel, of the entire clergy and of the great majority of the Romanian people, has build the most important edifice from ever: The Cathedral of Nation's Salvation?

But this leitmotif is not even new. All generations of theologians, during Church's history, they had the same impression and they affirmed the same decreasing of the faith in the times they lived, as a personal impression with pretensions of being a postulate, but, in those days, as it is also today, was and it is impossible to be justified such a statement, by some "scientific" research, be it even a sociological survey... We do not believe that such a justification would be ever possible, since those who are spiritually advanced they hide this advancement, and the beginners tend to value too much their faithfulness.

But, behold, God has allowed us to know a man who has been saved and who, still living here on earth, he lives also in heavens, in the Kingdom of God!

Within out remembrance, we confess our sins to the same spiritual guide. We knew him, since the beginning, as the priest, the man, in who there is no doubt regarding the faith. When he utters the words of the prayers of the Holy Liturgy, he utters them with his whole thought, with his whole power, and with the whole his heart – he utters them with clean faith. When he prays, he and the prayer are one – he is the prayer itself. We never saw him tired, or impatient; he has never lost his spiritual gentleness. He is always the first to

come at the religious service, and the last to leave. And all his spiritual gifts he has been endowed with, they allowed to be built around him, as around a spring of blessing and of holy grace, godlike beauty concretized in churchly and soul's edification.

At the last confession we did, we saw the Father being so appeased, as only the Saints of the Church must have been! He was emanating a love for the neighbor, which was coming from above. He was next to us, but he became totally transparent to the Holy Ghost. He seemed to no longer be material. When, after we confessed the sins, he uttered the prayer for forgiveness, his hand, resting upon our pate, it was transmitting us the love of the Father Who receives back His profligate son. We felt the forgiveness as a really actual fact.

The Father continued to receive confessions for a while, until the last believer. His face was like a fire, and his rich beard and hair, of a pure and shiny white, were as an aura to him.

We have seen then, that he has been saved.

Brothers and sisters, the faith is more or less, but only God know how much it is, and the salvation remains forever possible within the Church of Christ!

SUMMARY

Present work approaches the so-complex problem of the Christian believers` salvation within the Church of Christ.

The entire work of Father Stăniloae, has the salvation as its finality, as state achieved by working the commandments and the virtues, and by doing good deeds, in full freedom of choosing the good or the evil, but under the tension of love with which God invites us to surrender ourselves to Him, love due to which He sent us His Only Begotten Son, to become permanent savior sacrifice for us.

Communion, in the multilateralism of its aspects, between believers, within Church and world, between believers and Christ, into the Holy Ghost, and, consequently, between believers and God the Father, it is reckoned by Father Stăniloae as the foundation of the salvation. The man, as person, he is called by God the Word, as Person of the Holy Trinity, to reject the egotism of the individualism, so to die to himself, for living a savior life into Christ.

Salvation, tells us Father Stăniloae, is not possible outside Church. Christ is alive and living within His Church; within Church of Christ rests the Holy Ghost; out of the Church of Christ the Holy Ghost radiates into believers; therefore, only by celebrating and participating to the Holy Mysteries, within Church, the believers can receive salvation as a gift from God.

And the salvation, as defined by Father Stăniloae, it is a process through which:

“(...) man’s heart opens through a love, which is not only the peak of the virtues, but also of knowing God, being the appanage of a mind which has cleaned itself of passions. Besides, by cleaning the body and the soul of passions, and by filling them up with the love for God, it cleans the mind, in the same time, of passionate cogitation, which crooks the things and the persons and close them into a narrow horizon, elevating it through the wide and luminous horizon in which it sees them, to knowing God.”¹

¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology) / B. Mântuirea omului în Biserică, înțelesurile, etapele și condițiile ei (Orthodox Dogmatic*

Father Stăniloae approached in the works of his holiness, the very complex problems, but belonging to a unitary theme, of the salvation, the way in which the One, Holy, Synodal, and Apostolic Church, maintains in efficiency the means through which the man can be saved; within Church the believers are in the savior presence of the Word of God and of the Holy Ghost, Who work upon believers, through the Holy Mysteries. Salvation, as death of the own self, and willingly surrender to Christ, and as living into Christ, it begins through the initiation of the believer in the Church's Mysteries, through Baptism – when it is received into the soul the grace of the Holy Ghost -, Anointment and Impartation with the Most-Precious Body and with the Most-Holy Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and then is continued through the own effort of renouncing to the sins, of remaining outside sins, and of ascending, by working the virtues and the commandments, towards God; this ascension starts here, in the present life, as foretasting the kingdom, and it continues, for the ones who have been saved, in the epektasis of the relentless ascending in the eternity of the love of God, in the life to come. God descends towards the believer - who ascends on the narrow path of the salvation – and helps him, in the same time, to ascend, so that the man's movement of ascension – insomuch as it is allowed to the man – it is accompanied also by the movement of God Who is coming closer to the man, on the measure of the man's spiritual advancement. Salvation takes place in the Church of Christ, but it radiates its beneficial influence within the whole society, within family, and upon the neighbor.

The Church of Christ, through the work of the Holy Mysteries and of Its Saints – who through their sacrifice refresh (always, and at the right time) the hope -, maintains alive and working the faith in the possibility of being saved, even in the super-technological and globalized society from today. If we do not fall in the fatalist trap of an end of the world that has already come^{2,3}, we will be able to see that the

Theology / B. Man's Salvation within Church, Its Meanings, Stages and Conditions), Publishing House of the Biblical and Missionary Institute, Bucharest, 1997, p. 166.

² Matthew 24: 36: Romanian Orthodox Bible (ROB): "And that day and that hour nobody knows about, neither the angels from heavens, nor the Son, but only the Father."; King James Bible (KJB): "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of

fight of the evil one against God, ever since the falling of Satan from heavens, it is a continuous fight, always inventing new ways of fighting, but being always a loser one! Until yesterday, the red plague of the communism killed with bestiality, in jails, Christian Saints, believing that thus it will kill Christ Himself, the One Who lives together and within Saints; a few centuries before, the cannons of a foreign faith were crumbling down the churches of the Orthodox Romanians, hoping to crumble down their faith itself, not understanding that the Kingdom of God is not from this world⁴; and before that, the Ottoman hordes were storming the country, but without being able to impose Islam to Romanians; during the times of a savage cruelty, of the Roman persecutions upon Christians, unthinkable crimes were inflicted upon Christian children, women, old people, and men, accompanied by the acclamations of the ecstatic pagan crowds... And, despite all of these, did the Church fall? Did Christ fall?

And, in what concerns Its age, the Church is still young, existing for less than two thousand years⁵, years which, as the

heaven, but my Father only.”

³ In this book we present the quotations from the Romanian Orthodox Bible in our own translation, from Romanian language, and in comparison to the text from King James Bible. We do this because the biblical texts from the two versions of the Bible, the Romanian Orthodox Bible (ROB) and the King James Bible (KJB), sometimes differ very much. The most obvious case of discrepancy is that of the psalms, they being grouped differently in the two Bibles, and starting with the Psalm no. 10 from KJB, the correspondent Psalm from ROB will be a number less (in this case no. 9). The correspondence of the Psalms' numbers becomes again parallel starting with the Psalm 148, and ROB contains also the uncanonical Psalm 151. There are also cases when the corresponding verses have a totally different content. For example: Psalm 139: 3: KJB: “Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways”; 138: 3: ROB: “My path and the thread of my life You have researched them, and all my ways, You have seen them from before.” Related to this, one can download for free, from www.academia.edu, our work: “Notebook no. 1: Comparative Study of the Psalms”, or one can ask for it at goleam@yahoo.com. We will be glad to help.

⁴ John 18: 36: ROB: “Jesus answered: My Kingdom is not from this world. If My Kingdom had been from this world, My servants would have fought to not be I surrendered to the Jews. But now My Kingdom is not here.”; KJB: “Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.”

⁵ Psalm 89: 4: ROB: “For, a thousand years before Your eyes, are like yesterday, that has passed, and like the watch of the night.”; KJB: “For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.”

Psalmist says, are as two days before God. Do not fear! The Church of God will last forever!⁶

Christians, in general, and especially us, the Orthodox ones, must convey a message of encouragement, of optimism, to the ones who are willing to listen to it, about the efficiency from ever and forever, of the Church of Christ, in working the salvation for Its believers; and in what regards us, let's work the commandments and the virtues the best as we can, for being partakers to the mercy of God!

As Father Stăniloae shows in all his writings, salvation is always actual, always possible, and it is always wanted by God, Who created the world and the man to be saved. Salvation, as ascension of the man towards God, it starts within the historical time, which, with its characteristics, it is given to the man to work the always actual commandments of Christ, the always actual and Living One. As the dogmas, says Father Stăniloae, though they remain always unchanged, far from confiscating the freedom of the one who believes, so is the Church, though it adapts itself to the times, while it remains in concordance to the truth of faith about the presence of the Lord Christ as permanent sacrifice, and of the Holy Ghost as work, the Church remains always alive and though it exists in immanent, in space and time, it exists in the same time also in transcendent, for Christ is its Head, being the connection bridge between believers and the Kingdom of God.

Salvation as objective of the believers, and also of the Church, it is the rationality for which Christ Embodied Himself, worked into world, was crucified, and ascended to heavens, and sits on the right hand of the Father, as Supreme Sacrifice, and He sent the Holy Ghost to comfort us, and to teach us the whole truth. Salvation, as purpose of the life into Christ, it is a living action, as long as we believe to Christ the Living One, and as long we remain living limbs of His Church.

In what regards the theological work of Father Stăniloae, even if this work is the protagonist of very numerous theological studies, we believe that it hasn't been sufficiently valued yet, and it is not sufficiently highlighted his contribution to the foundation of the Romanian theology, and

⁶ Matthew: 16: 18: ROB: "And I am telling you, that you are Peter and on this stone I will build My Church and the gates of the hell won't defeat it.": KJB: "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

of the Orthodox and Christian theology in general. Great theologians like Father Professor Andrew Louth, and Bishop Kallistos Ware, expressed in various occasions their sorrow for not having access to the spiritual heights of Father`s Stăniloae writings, because these writings haven`t been yet translated in English language. That`s why we consider as an essential aspect of valuing the works of Father Stăniloae, to be translated in languages of international circulation. Only timid attempts have been done in this direction, some of them leading to results unfitted to the importance of the work, and failing the necessity of preserving the fundamental stylistic features of the writing of the great theologian.

The present work aims to contribute to making Father`s Stăniloae more known, and to highlight the practical character of his writings. Father Stăniloae didn`t theorize by “floating above things”⁷, but the work of his holiness, in its entirety, it is a treaty of practical Orthodoxy to be applied in the daily life.

The whole Father`s Stăniloae theologizing - as we meet at the Holy Father of the Church - has very concrete and very coherent guiding lines, which give to his work unity and coherence. Communion with the neighbor, within the Church of Christ, it is one of these constants in approaching, and in expressing, the way to be followed for believer`s salvation. Relations between believers must have as model the inter-Trinitarian perichoresis, towards which these relations must tend, in expressing the dialogical love for the neighbor. Another constant is the affirmation that salvation cannot take place but within Church, this affirmation being founded on the truth of faith, according to which, Christ comes at epiclesis and gives himself, by sacrificing Himself, in the bread and in the wine of the Eucharist, transfigured by the work of the Holy Ghost. Wherefore could we have salvation, if not from Christ the Savior? And Christ and His Ghost are present and working in the Holy Mysteries, sustaining the believers in their effort of ascending towards God.

Father Stăniloae highlights time and again, by clearly showing the lineage from the Holy Scripture and from the Apostolic Tradition, of the Orthodox truth of faith, as a complete, undiminished way towards salvation, way which

⁷ Nichita Stănescu, *Respirări (Breathings)*, Sport Turism Publishing House, Bucharest, 1982.

preserves and conveys the whole Revelation. The living character of the Orthodoxy is given by the fact that Orthodoxy has Christ and the Holy Ghost present and working within Church, unlike Catholicism, or Protestantism, or the even wilder offshoots⁸ sprung out of the two mentioned ones; they banish Christ away, in a far and inaccessible heaven, or reject the Holy Mysteries, or a part of these ones, or urge the believers on astray and straying ways, impeding them to work for the truth, and to receive the whole truth.

Our work offers a perspective upon the doctrine of Father Stăniloae, concerning the salvation as practical, continuous, and progressive work, done by him who searches for to be saved, within and through the Orthodox Church.

Last but not least, in the work of Father Stăniloae are highlighted the dangers of an ecumenism slipped away from the imperial way of the equilibrium, and fallen into an all-costs-unionism. Father Stăniloae, though he expresses himself for the unity of the Church, he shows that salvation within the Church of Christ it is built by preserving the truth of faith and by avoiding any slipping away from this truth. Church's unity must come out of the union of the believers into Christ, and not by establishing worldly hierarchies and precepts, so to "replace the law of God with our law"⁹.

We reckon that Father Stăniloae excelled in all domains of the Orthodox theology – dogmatics, Christology, ecclesiology, eschatology, soteriology, missiology, if is to mention only some

⁸ John: 15: 2, 4-6: **ROB**: "Any offshoot which does not bring forth fruits into Me, He cuts it off; and any offshoot which brings forth fruits, He cleans it up, to bring more fruits. // Remain into Me, and I into you. As the offshoot, which cannot bring forth fruits from itself, if doesn't remain into the vine, neither can you, if you do not remain into Me. // I am the vine, you are the offshoots. He who remains into Me, and I into him, that one brings forth many fruits, because without Me you cannot do anything. // If somebody doesn't remain into Me, he is thrown outside as the offshoots and wither; and they gather them up and throw them in fire and they burn."; **KJB**: "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. // Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. // I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. // If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned."

⁹ Matthew: 15: 3: **ROB**: "And He, answering, said to them: Why do you transgress the commandment of God for your tradition?"; **KJB**: "But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?"

of them – and he deserves to be considered as founder of theological school, at least in what regards the theology of the communion and of the community, and the personalist¹⁰ character of the Revelation, so brightly presented in his writings.

¹⁰ We use here the term *personalism* starting from *person, the Supreme Person being God, Who unveils Himself to the man in the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity*. The man, as person, enters the dialogue with God as Trinity of Persons. Losing the character of Person, would lead to an impersonal God, a derivate from the nature's phenomena, an idol.

I. Church – Environment of the Salvation

I.1 Church – the Body of Christ

The Church of God, tells Father Professor Dumitru Stăniloae, in his monumental work entitled *The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, it is the work of Our God Jesus Christ, *in development*¹¹, it is the place within which the possibility of the salvation is permanently available to the ones who come to pray and to participate to the celebration of the Holy Mysteries.

The salvation is brought by Lord Christ, the plan of the Father from ever, with the man and with the whole creation; the salvation starts with the Embodiment, it continues with the Holy Living of Christ within world, it has as culminant points the Crucifixion, and death on Cross, and the Resurrection, and the Ascent; these works are called by Father Stăniloae as *prime savior acts*, being continued by the descent of the Holy Ghost, Who being received by us as One from the Trinity, we receive in the same time Christ within ourselves, and we join the Church; and the Church is the Body of Christ Jesus, being in the same time the Kingdom of God within us.

The assault of the worldly things upon the Church of Christ, aims, if not being able to uproot definitively this vine planted by the Lord, than, at least to diminish its capacity of bringing forth fruits, so that the wine of the salvation to be an inefficient one. The schism takes place consequently to the trying of the Catholic Church to accumulate the worldly power upon the Church of Christ, fact that brings all the other spiritual sufferings and dogmatic slipping and divisions, upon the clergy and upon the believers who have been cut off from the body of the One Church. The difference between the Orthodox Christendom and the Western one it is given, in its ultimate essence, by the presence or by the absence of love. The Orthodox Christendom is able to see and to receive the acts of God as acts of love, destined to call as to salvation, by receiving the sacrifice of Christ, by adopting us, whilst in West, the sacrifice on the Cross is a juridical act, which “gives God

¹¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)* (*The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*), Publishing House of the Biblical and Missionary Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 1997, vol. II, p. 93.

satisfaction”, by paying Him the moral debt we inherited consequently to the Adam’s falling into sin; after this payment, God withdraws Himself from history and leaves behind a dry, institutional Church, or even a meaningless Church.

Within the Orthodox Church, Christ is present and works within us – for through the Holy Ghost we become capable of receiving Him. He dwells within our souls, and He works within us, for making us worthy to inherit the Kingdom of God¹².

Christ assumes the human nature for restoring it, and for taking it to heavens through Ascent, His Body being the first human body, after Adam’s falling, which is part of the Kingdom of God and, in the same time, the first Body of the Church.

The Church receives *real existence* since the descent of the Holy Ghost, at Pentecost, when the present Apostles and disciples receive Holy Ghost as tongues of fire, and they are transfigured and go past the usual barriers of the knowledge. Speaking in foreign tongues, which they did not know before, this is in the same time the sign that the Church of Christ is a universal one, that the Revelation is addressed to all the human beings, no matter the people they belong to¹³.

Constituting the Church it is reckoned by Father Stăniloae in all its extension: Embodiment, Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Ascent – as acts of founding the Church in its potentiality; this laying down of foundation being continued by the irradiation of the Holy Ghost, Who, by extending Himself within the souls of the believers spiritualizes them, deifies them, saves them, and, on this way, the Church “*it is actually founded*”¹⁴, through the extension of the godlike body of Christ within the believers who receive Him.

Father Stăniloae discerns two stages of the savior work of Christ: one being within the body, within the world, in “*His*

¹² “But Christ saves us because He dwells within us through the Holy Ghost. Through this one it irradiates within us, from His Holy spiritualized Body, His saving and deifying of us power.” (Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, volume II, p. 93)

¹³ “The descent of the Holy Ghost is the one which gives existence to the Church, laying down the beginning of the dwelling of the deified body of Christ within the other human beings and, with this, beginning to the Church”. (Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, volume II, p. 93)

¹⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. II, p. 93.

personal humanity”¹⁵, and the second stage, when the savior work extends to all the human beings who receive Christ into the Holy Ghost. Consequently to the Embodiment, to the Resurrection, and to Ascent, the Church is founded. Father Stăniloae says that this work of founding takes place “*virtually*”¹⁶, for Christ, as first member of the Church of God, constitutes the potentiality out of Whose body, as the Father Stăniloae says: “*to be extended the salvation as godlike life within us*”¹⁷.

We meet in the analyzed work a kerugmatik affirmation of a great spiritual daring, made by Father Stăniloae:

“*Without Church the savior work of Christ can't be accomplished*”¹⁸,

...affirmation we cannot subscribe to, due to the fact that we understand through it that it affirms impossibility related to God.

Within all the content of his writings, when he theologizes about the Holy Trinity, Father Stăniloae strengthens the content of the dogma of the Holy Trinity, and he corrects the dogmatic mistake of considering the Holy Ghost as being separated from Christ; this mistake is generated by the wrong evaluation of the relation between the Ascent of Christ and the Descent of the Holy Ghost, namely by considering these two savior acts as being generator of separation between the Two Persons of the Holy Trinity. Christ, ascending to heavens and sitting on the right hand of the Father, He doesn't isolate Himself into heavens, becoming absent from His Church; likewise, the Holy Ghost, by descending and “*starting*” the “*actual*” Church, He is not alone in His work; the isolation mentioned above it is considered by

¹⁵ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology), vol. II, p. 93.

¹⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology), vol. II, p. 93.

¹⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology), vol. II, p. 93.

¹⁸ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology), vol. II, p. 94. We consider as being more appropriate to express the idea of Father Professor Dumitru Stăniloae as thus (for avoiding affirming, that there could be a thing impossible to God): God chose that the foundations stone of the savior work of Christ to be His Church.

Father Stăniloae as a beginning of the rationalism or of the sentimentalism, the first one leading into Catholicism to instituting a “*locum tenens of Christ*”¹⁹, and the second one leading to the scattering generated by considering the “*sentimental caprices*” as:

“*(...) impulses of the Holy Ghost, unrestrained by the presence of a Christ, and which show us a model and well contoured humanity (...)*”²⁰

One of the most important contributions brought by Professor Stăniloae it is the insistent urge, of course proved by his personal example, namely of going back to the sources of the Christendom, to the Holy Scripture and to the writing of the Holy Fathers of the Church, renouncing, in the same time, to the blurring and sterile structures of the scholastic. For strengthening his affirmations, Father Stăniloae brings as arguments just the words of the Savior: “*Behold, I am with you to the end of the time*”²¹; and about the Holy Ghost: “*He will be with you forever*”²².

Father Stăniloae further analyzes the fact of the presence within us of the Holy Trinity, Who makes the salvation possible in His Unity:

“*The presence of the Holy Ghost within us is tied to the one of the Son and to the one of the Father*” so that “*if there wouldn't be the Holy Ghost, we wouldn't be able to call Christ as a Lord, neither could us call God, as Father*”²³.

By showing that salvation is the result of the work of the Holy Trinity, as a unity of Persons, within us, Father Stăniloae brings forward as argument the fact that salvation comes as

¹⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. II, p. 94.

²⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. II, p. 94.

²¹ Matthew 28: 20. In KJB we have: “Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”

²² John 14: 16. In KJB we have: “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;”

²³ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. II, p. 94

consequence of deification, as transfiguration according to the image of Christ, and deification has as finality our adoption as sons of the Father. Thus, the Holy Ghost proceeded from the Father, by the Son, makes us also able to receive the infinite love of the Father. Priest Professor Stăniloae concludes:

“(...) in other words, the Holy Ghost works out of Christ within us (...) through the fact that irradiates from Him the light of the endless power and love of God; or the Holy Ghost makes Christ more obvious to us, as Lord (...)”²⁴.

The necessity of the Ascent of the Son, as man, at the Father, it is given by the fact that through this Ascent, the Son is *“filled up in His body with the Holy Ghost, as the Father”*²⁵, and thus His Body becomes the consummately spiritualized environment, through which the Holy Ghost irradiates within us, us who are the “bricks” composing the Church, we who – by faith, and by belonging to the Church – are the Kingdom of God, and through this irradiation, salvation becomes possible.

A constant of the theological thinking of Father Stăniloae is the conception about the infinite love of the Holy Trinity, in Whose intimacy the believers enter consequently to the salvation, salvation that takes place within Church, and only in communion with the neighbor. Our entering in the *“intimacy of the infinite love of God”* happened through the Ascent of the Son at the Father, by the Son bearing the human body, and the human nature, overwhelmed by the Holy Ghost. And by the flowing over, of the love of the Father upon the Son, this paternal love overflows upon believers, who are welcomed by the Father, as His sons.

The presence of the Holy Ghost within believers, it strengthens and makes efficient the presence of Christ within us; but in the same time, at the basis of the work of the Holy Ghost, there remains Christ. This two-way relation between the two Trinitarian Persons it is expressed by Father Stăniloae, using the rhetorical mean of the comparison, like this:

²⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. II, p. 94.

²⁵ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. II, p. 95.

“When the sunlight, crossing through the clouds, comes on the first plan, it doesn’t come only for itself, but to make the seen things clearer”²⁶.

We encounter at Father Stăniloae one of the rarest theological attempt to “solve” the so difficult to analyze and express Person of the Holy Ghost, as Hypostasis. Such attempts are rare, and too often they fall into sterile and hard to accept tortuous discourse, just because to the human mind it is so difficult to conceptualize, to imagine the Third Person of the Holy Trinity. If the Father, as notion, it seems to relatively be familiar to us, and if perceiving the Son of the Father brings supplementary difficulties in perceiving it – as unique Person in two natures, in the same time man and God -, perceiving the Holy Ghost as Person, though unequivocally stated by the Nicaea-Constantinopolitan Creed, it remains a hard place of the theology. Father Stăniloae presents the relations between the Holy Ghost and the other Trinitarian Persons, as also the work of each Person in collaboration with the other two Persons, without, though, trying to imagine “concrete features” of the Holy Ghost as Hypostasis, by affirming that:

“Just through this (through the fellowship of the work with Christ and with the Father, o. n.), it is possible now to be revealed to us, also the Holy Ghost as Hypostasis, therefore in a specially accentuated and sensitive manner of the spiritual meaning of the word (...)"²⁷

The only way to “see” the Holy Ghost was that one which was transparent through the totally spiritualized body and through the work of Christ on earth. But, what could - the ones worthy to meet Christ - see? Behold what Father Stăniloae says about the ones who saw Him:

²⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (*The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*), vol. II, p. 95.

²⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (*The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*), p. 95.

“(...) the infinite and fully intensive depths, of God, in His work towards us.”²⁸

Behold that, again, the Holy Ghost is defined as transparency of the Father, and of His works, through the Son, therefore as a manifestation of the Father and of the Son.

In Jesus Christ, the One Who was living on earth, the apostles and the disciples were seeing preponderantly His humanity. The Holy Ghost was increasingly transparent through Christ, on the measure of the evolution of Jesus, Who was increasingly becoming *“consummate man at the measure of the age of the fulness of the Son of God”* and *“Word of the Father”*. After Ascent, the Holy Ghost was to plainly show Himself, by descending as tongues of fire, upon the ones who were present to Pentecost. Father Stăniloae warns us again, as we have shown previously, about the danger of thinking this succession, alternatively, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, on the foreground of the salvation. This is because what we could call “presence” or “absence” it actually is our capacity or incapacity to “see” Him²⁹.

*“The Holy Ghost remains within Church”*³⁰, but only if there is present also Savior Christ, Who is in the same time the Head of the Church, continuously coming into the hearts of the ones who believe, but remaining in the same time on the right hand of the Father.

Father Stăniloae, though, he shows that the Church has no “monopole” upon the Holy Ghost, for *“The Holy Ghost comes, though, even beyond the Church”*, a Church defined by Father Stăniloae as *“the intimacy of the believers’ communion”*³¹. Behold how, Father Stăniloae, he nuances and reestablishes, the analyzed affirmation, on the middle way:

²⁸ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology), p. 96

²⁹ Related to these, it is to be noticed the fact that Father Professor PhD Academician Stăniloae, in his fundamental work entitled *Iisus Hristos sau Restaurarea Omului* (Jesus Christ or the Man’s Restoration) (Second Edition, Omnisco Publishing House, Craiova, 1993), statistically speaking, he uses for naming the Son of God, at the beginning of the work, preponderantly the appellative *Jesus*; and then he uses, mainly, the appellative *Jesus Christ*; within the last third of the work, he uses the name *Christ*, or *Christ Jesus*.

³⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology), vol. II, p. 95.

³¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology), vol. II, p. 95.

“That’s why, on one hand, the Church has Him continuously (the Holy Ghost, o. n.), though, on the other hand, it continuously asks for Him. It asks for Him, for it has Him (...)”

“Remaining” of Christ, and the Holy Ghost, within Church, it is not a static situation, but a continuous development, a continuously improved existence, an always advancing one. And the continuous “coming”, or the “descent” of Christ, and of the Holy Ghost, within Church, and within the souls of the believers, it means, actually, the continuous ascent of the Church towards the Holy Trinity and an increasingly closer *embrace*³², in communion, of the believers, by the Persons of the Holy Trinity.

We can see, from the affirmations of Father Stăniloae, the absolute character conferred, by his holiness, to the faith, to the communion, to the Christian love, in which we must engage with the whole our power, with the whole our cogitation, out of the whole our heart; as we give more faith and love, more love and faith are given to us, in an infinite ascension towards Paradise, and then in Paradise.

The Father highlights that Christ and the Holy Ghost – Who are within Church, Who remain within Church, and Who continuously descend within Church for elevating the Church to God – They are Persons. One mustn’t lose from sight, and it is necessary to always be highlighted, the fact that the Holy Trinity it is a communion of Persons, and, by no means, a combination of energies, or of *impersonal powers*³³.

We meet again the genius of Father Stăniloae in using the tropes, when he affirms that Christ and the Holy Ghost, “They remain and in the same time They are coming”³⁴ within Church; we have here such an illustrative example of using the paradox as rhetorical means for expressing the ineffable.

But how could They be coming and remaining within Church, in the same time? Father Stăniloae carefully adds

³² Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology), vol. II, p. 95.

³³ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology), vol. II, p. 95.

³⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology), vol. II, p. 96.

here: “*by Their will*” -; not by the will of by the invocations, or by the prayers, no matter how strong these would be, done by the ones who call for Them; They come out of mercy, out of godlike love, and not because somebody, or something, could force them to come.

The Holy Ghost descends at Pentecost upon the Apostles who “*were tarrying in prayer*” (Acts 1, 14)³⁵, but Father Stăniloae comes and shows us that this descent upon the Apostles, it doesn’t take place on a barren ground, but: “*on the basis of a partial possession of the Ghost, given to them by Christ after Resurrection*”³⁶.

“*The Church was filled up by the Holy Ghost as Hypostasis*”³⁷. The Ghost is, and descends within Church, not as an impersonal power, but as Person. But also Christ, He is, He remains, and He comes within Church, in His quality of “*God the Word, the Hypostasis out of Whom derives and towards Whom tend to come back, the rationalities of the entire Creation*”³⁸.

Father Stăniloae concludes that the things presented above, show that salvation:

“*(...) it is brought to completion in the form of the Church, which is our union with God and amongst us.*”³⁹

In communion, the human beings, with the help from Christ – a help they ask for, whilst they are into the Holy Ghost – given within Church, they can transcend their state of

³⁵ Acts 1: 14: ROB: “All of these ones, in one thought, they were tarrying in prayer together with the women and with Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.” KJB: “These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.

³⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. II, p. 96.

³⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. II, p. 96.

³⁸ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. II, p. 96.

³⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. II, p. 96.

*monads*⁴⁰ dominated by egotism, and by the sin, and they can be saved. Father Stăniloae says that:

*“(...) the state of salvation equals to the appurtenance to Church, or to the gathering of the saved ones into Church, with their common participation to the Body of Christ, elevated above any preoccupation about themselves, through that state of permanent sacrifice, which is permanent in Him. On the basis of His divine Hypostasis and of His state of sacrifice, Christ wants and can bring together all human beings, by extending Himself within them through the Holy Ghost, Who imprints them the same disposition of sacrifice from the Body of Christ.”*⁴¹

Father Stăniloae sees in the fact of the descent of the Holy Ghost, upon the Apostles gathered together (and not individually), precisely the argument for the fact that the Holy Ghost doesn't descend, and He “*isn't truly present but only within the communion of the Church, or where the Church is*”⁴², the gathered together Apostles being “*the first*” Church.

He defines the Church by using an apophthegm of a great concision and expressivity, thus:

*“The Church is the union of everything that exists, or it is destined to comprise everything that exists: God and creation. It is the fulfillment of the eternal plan of God: the all-unity”*⁴³.

⁴⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (*The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*), vol. II, p. 96.

⁴¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (*The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*), vol. II, p. 96.

⁴² Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (*The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*), vol. II, p. 96.

⁴³ One can again remark the rhetorical genius of Father Stăniloae – the greatest Romanian creator of theological language ever existed – who has the rhetorical catachresis as his favorite trope. Thus, in this case, with the linguistic element “all”, which comprise amongst its meanings also the one of “consummate”, and with the noun “unity”, he creates by adjunction a new linguistic structure, which has the meaning of “consummate unity”.

⁴⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (*The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*), vol. II, p. 97.

Father Stăniloae identifies within Church an antithetical dichotomy, having its parts in a transfiguring confrontation. A first part is constituted by the eternal, by the uncreated, by the spiritual. The second part comprises: the temporal, the created, and the material. The first part comes to overwhelm the second one, by transfiguring it, by fulfilling it. The eternal overwhelms the temporal, the uncreated deifies the created, and the spiritual spiritualizes the material. Shortly speaking, the two parts being in this complementarity relation are: “*The heavens and the earth penetrated by heavens*”⁴⁵:

“*The Church is a communitarian Self into Christ as You, but in the same time the Church’s Self is Christ.*”⁴⁶

“*The Church is the immanent having within itself the transcendent, the Trinitarian community of Persons full of endless love for the world.*”⁴⁷

The Church being the Body of Christ and Christ being the head of the Church, consequently the Church has itself the attributes of the Son of God, one of these attributes being the theandric constitution. The Son of God is both man and God, and He conveys this theandric-ism upon His Church. Father Stăniloae says regarding this:

“*Its content (of the Church, o. n.), it consists of Christ united according to the godlike nature with the Father and with the Ghost, and according to the human nature, with us.*”⁴⁸

Being the Church the Body of Christ, Christ being the Head of His Church, father Stăniloae shows that:

⁴⁵ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. II, p. 97.

⁴⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. II, p. 97.

⁴⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. II, p. 97.

⁴⁸ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. II, p. 97.

“*The Church can be called Christ.*”⁴⁹

One cannot speak about Church without presupposing Christ, and one cannot speak about Christ by separating Him from His Church, though the limitations and the scholastic⁵⁰ necessities impose to the discourse about Christ and about Church, to approach sometimes in a differentiated manner the concerning aspects.

Christ is in the same time the Source of the Church, the One Who gives power to the believers to come and to remain forever within His Church, and also the Model to be followed by the believers in order to be saved. By these qualities: Source of His Church, Source of believers` power, and Model, Christ comes and *imprints*⁵¹ Himself into believers, restoring them through deification, helping them to become in His image and likeness.

By assuming the human nature, Christ the Only Begotten One, the Son of God, He makes possible the conveying, through the Holy Ghost, of His godlike features, so that He “*elevates our humanity in the infinite union with God as Person*”⁵². We, the believers, to be saved, must bring ourselves as sacrifice to God:

“(...) because only through sacrifice, surrendering us to God, we crumble down the walls which close us within our limitation, and we enter the full communion with God and with our fellow humans.”⁵³

Without the Embodiment of the Son of God, the Church wouldn't have been existed. The Embodiment, by the assuming of the human nature by the Son of God, it makes

⁴⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. II, p. 97.

⁵⁰ We are using here the term *scholastic* in the sense of a paradigm of a: „*way of thinking and activity based on formal, theoretical knowledge*” (www.Dex.ro) and not with the meaning defined by the Catholic medieval (or of today's) scholastics.

⁵¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. II, p. 98.

⁵² Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. II, p. 98.

⁵³ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. II, p. 98.

possible the conveying of the features of the Son towards believers, through the Holy Ghost, through deification, in front of God. The Embodiment was followed by the Holy Work of Christ within world, by His death on Cross, by Resurrection, and by Ascent. These all, as also the eternal state of sacrifice assumed by Christ for us, give us:

*“the power of overcoming the egotism from within us and to virtually impart ourselves of His Resurrection, liberating us even now from the limitation of the egotism and of the laws of the corruptibility.”*⁵⁴

...and thus we are saved.

The theandric nature of the Church comes from the quality of Christ of being the Head of His Church. Christ – tells us Father Stăniloae – has in common, in His body, the human nature; and not confounded to His body, but also without being separated from His body, He has His Godhead. In His quality of Head of the Church, Christ conveys to the believers both the human nature in its not-corrupted sublime, that one of the Hypostasis, within which the entire humanity is recapitulated, and also the godhead which is transparent through His totally spiritualized body.

Salvation of the human nature becomes possible only when human nature is assumed by Christ Jesus, being thus opened the gate through which the believers *can desire themselves towards God*⁵⁵, and God descends within humans to save them.

Consequently, Christ assumes the human nature, dressing up the godhead in human body – by getting it enhypostatized.

The continuous improving and ascending of the human nature, into the Son and towards the Father, namely the salvation, it takes place as an endless process, which starts in

⁵⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. II, p. 98.

⁵⁵ We are paraphrasing here the syntagma used by Priest Professor PhD Ion Bria in his work entitled *Dictionary of Orthodox Theology*, when he defines the term of *epektasis*: “*the desire after the heavenly ones, towards the ones from ahead*”.

this world and it will continue into the infinite⁵⁶ kindness of God.

I. 2. Trinitarian Relations and the Life of the Church⁵⁷

For the salvation to be possible, the Church must mirror, in its living and in its feeling, the relations of love between the Persons of the Holy Trinity. The whole doctrine of the Church must keep unaltered the dogmatic fundament, like this fundament starts from Revelation, and as it is continued by the Holy Tradition. The ecclesiology, the theology in its entirety, must urge the believers towards a balanced, harmonious vision of the Church's constitution, and of the Church's role as "laboratory of salvation".

The Orthodox Church, remaining "*in the vine*", it preaches the complete teaching about the Holy Trinity, a teaching taking its sap from truth. The dogma of the Holy Trinity stays at the basis of the entire teaching of the Orthodox Church, and transmitting it wholly, over time through, it is a paramount matter. In exchange, Catholicism slips into *Christomonism*⁵⁸, for it hasn't a consistent and coherent teaching about the Holy Ghost; the Protestantism falls into a *individualistic-anarchic*⁵⁹ feeling, confounding this feeling to the manifestation of the Holy Ghost, forgetting that: "*The Holy Ghost is the Ghost of the community*"⁶⁰.

Father Stăniloae shows about the equilibrium preserved by the Orthodox Church, when speaks about the Son of God and about the Holy Trinity, that, on one hand, without the mediation of the Holy Ghost, the connection with Christ Jesus is not possible⁶¹, and on the other hand: "*one doesn't live into the Holy Ghost, except in connection with Christ*"⁶².

⁵⁶ Father Stăniloae, for illustrating the notion of epektasis, he uses a syntagma which illustrates the rhetorical genius of his holiness: "*this endless end*" (quoted work, p. 100). The rhetorical analysis it shows that this syntagma can be framed to more than one category of tropes, as would be: diafora, contraries, paradox, and oxymoron.

⁵⁷ This title is taken from *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)* Review, no. 4 / 1964.

⁵⁸ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Relațiile Treimice și viața Bisericii” („The Trinitarian Relations and the Life of the Church”, *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, 4 / 1964, p. 504).

⁵⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Relațiile Treimice și viața Bisericii” („The Trinitarian Relations and the Life of the Church”, *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, 4 / 1964, p. 504).

⁶⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Relațiile Treimice și viața Bisericii” („The Trinitarian Relations and the Life of the Church”, *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, 4 / 1964, p. 504).

⁶¹ Father Stăniloae bring as argument the quote from I Corinthians 12: 3: “(...) nobody,

Father Stăniloae shows that speaking only about Christ Jesus - like the Catholic and Protestant Occident tends to do - it weakens the intimate connection with Him, for this connection cannot subsist without the Holy Ghost. This diminution determines at Catholics an estrangement of Christ from His Church, an "isolation" of Him in heavens, fact that leads to the necessity of having a "locum-tenens" on earth, and the Protestants imagine a distant Christ, Who, once ascended to heavens, He no longer stays in connection with His Church. Behold how, by "losing" the Holy Ghost, the right-judgment of the connection of the Holy Ghost with Christ Jesus, **it leads to the impossibility of the salvation**, by causing the helplessness in receiving the Living Christ, in His continuous work within His living Church.

Father Dumitru Stăniloae shows that, since the problem of the proceeding of the Holy Ghost becomes, especially after the schism from 1054, a fiery subject of the theological disputes between Occident and Orient, three Byzantines: Patriarch Gregory the Cypriote of Constantinople (1283-1289), Saint Gregory Palamas († 1353), and Josif Vrijenije (who live at the beginning of the 14th century), tried to explain and to define the patristic expression according to which the Holy Ghost proceeds (from of the Father): "*through the Son*".

In this idea are presented the three theological conceptions of the enumerated personalities. Thus, Patriarch Gregory the Cypriote opposes to the Catholic interpretation, according to which "*through the Son*" it would mean that "*The Father gives existence to the Holy Ghost through the Son*"⁶³, explaining that this expression:

"(...) it clearly tries to show the unveiling (*την φανέρωσιν*⁶⁴) of the Holy Ghost through the Son, Who takes His existence from the Father."⁶⁵

speaking into the Ghost of God, says: Anathema be Jesus! – likewise, nobody can say: Lord is Jesus, - except into Holy Ghost." (*Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*), 4 / 1964, p. 505). In KJB we have: "(...) no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost."

⁶² Dumitru Stăniloae, „Relațiile Treimice și viața Bisericii” („The Trinitarian Relations and the Life of the Church”, *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*), 4 / 1964, p. 505.

⁶³ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Relațiile Treimice și viața Bisericii” („The Trinitarian Relations and the Life of the Church”, *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*), 4 / 1964, p. 507.

⁶⁴ In English language: *Revelation*.

This affirmation comes on the basis of Saint John Damascene's indicating: “(...) *only God and the Father as causative in Trinity*”⁶⁶. In the same time, from the same Holy Father Damascene, Patriarch Gregory the Cypriote brings as argument also the quote: “(...) *we call the Holy Ghost of the Son, but we do not call Him the Son*”⁶⁷.

Patriarch Gregory the Cypriote has as his own idea, like shown by Father Stăniloae, the fact that the unveiling of the Holy Ghost through the Son, it takes place “*not only in temporal plan, but also in the eternal plan*”⁶⁸; “the showing and the shining of the Ghost through the Son represent the eternal relation between the Ghost and the Son”⁶⁹.

The expression “through the Son” would indicate, in the conception of Patriarch Gregory the Cypriote, also: “*the procurement and the giving and the sending to us*”⁷⁰ of the Ghost, by the Son.

Father Stăniloae indicates that Patriarch Gregory the Cypriote identifies two movements of Ghost, which “*are neither confounded nor separated*”⁷¹; “*a movement towards existence (the proceeding) which is from the Father*”⁷², and “*a movement towards showing or shining, which is through the Son*”⁷³.

Father Stăniloae shows that the two movements, the one of proceeding and the one of unveiling, are so closely tied, that they determined Patriarch Gregory the Cypriote to use common terms for proceeding and shining, fact that caused John Hila, Metropolitan of Ephesus, to denounce him to

⁶⁵ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Relațiile Treimice și viața Bisericii” („The Trinitarian Relations and the Life of the Church”, *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, 4 / 1964, p. 507).

⁶⁶ Quoted from the source: *De fide orth.*, libr. I, cap. XII; P. G. t. XCIV).

⁶⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Relațiile Treimice și viața Bisericii” („The Trinitarian Relations and the Life of the Church”, *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, 4 / 1964, p. 507).

⁶⁸ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Relațiile Treimice și viața Bisericii” („The Trinitarian Relations and the Life of the Church”, *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, 4 / 1964, p. 507).

⁶⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Relațiile Treimice și viața Bisericii” („The Trinitarian Relations and the Life of the Church”, *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, 4 / 1964, p. 507).

⁷⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Relațiile Treimice și viața Bisericii” („The Trinitarian Relations and the Life of the Church”, *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, 4 / 1964, p. 507).

⁷¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Relațiile Treimice și viața Bisericii” („The Trinitarian Relations and the Life of the Church”, *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, 4 / 1964, p. 507).

⁷² Dumitru Stăniloae, „Relațiile Treimice și viața Bisericii” („The Trinitarian Relations and the Life of the Church”, *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, 4 / 1964, p. 507).

⁷³ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Relațiile Treimice și viața Bisericii” („The Trinitarian Relations and the Life of the Church”, *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, 4 / 1964, p. 507).

Emperor Michael Paleologus, as being one who would spread the same confusion as the Catholics did.

But, as Father Stăniloae specifies, in the conception of the Patriarch Gregory the Cypriote:

*“The shininess of the Ghost through the Son is not the expression of the identity of being, between the Ghost and the Son, but of a relation from Person to Person.”*⁷⁴

Explaining the shininess of the Holy Ghost through the Son, Father Stăniloae approaches also another premise, namely what in the New Testament and in the writings of the Holy Fathers of the Church it is called *resting of the Ghost that takes place upon the embodied Son (...)* for deducing from here that the same resting of the Ghost takes place also upon the not-embodied Son”. This takes place for the attributes of the Son, as Person of the Holy Trinity, aren’t diminished through the embodiment, the Son preserving His godhead intact, through and after embodiment, so that He doesn’t come out from the perichoresis that characterizes the inter-Trinitarian life; the Son embodies Himself but He doesn’t leave the bosom of the Father.

If the Ghost wouldn’t proceed only from the Father and He wouldn’t rest Himself within the Son, but the Ghost would proceed also from the Son, then Father would cease to be the **sole causative** of all existences, and then, one could imagine that each new generated person would be, at his turn, causative of an (some) existence (existences). Father Stăniloae expresses this vision very poetically:

*“(...) we would have a gradual degradation of the Godhead: an endless line of persons, increasingly far from the **not-caused cause**, imparting themselves increasingly less from that **cause**.”*⁷⁵

Proceeding of the Holy Ghost, from the Father, and His resting upon the Son, are seen by Father Stăniloae as a unifier

⁷⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Relațiile Treimice și viața Bisericii” („The Trinitarian Relations and the Life of the Church”, *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, 4 / 1964, p. 509).

⁷⁵ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Relațiile Treimice și viața Bisericii” („The Trinitarian Relations and the Life of the Church”, *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, 4 / 1964, p. 511).

element, as an overcoming of the duality produced by the birth of the Son from the Father:

“Duality occurred through the birth of the Son from the Father, it is reduced to unity through the proceeding of the Holy Ghost”⁷⁶.

The relation between the Son and the Holy Ghost it is given by their always common presence, both in time and outside time.

The Ghost cannot be “seen” without Christ, but only in the presence of Christ. Even when the Scripture speaks about the descent of the Holy Ghost in the image of a dove, this descent takes place upon Christ at Baptism; the Ghost shows Himself as tongues of fire upon Apostles, but as being sent by Christ, to be their Comforter and Teacher. So that Christ cannot be “known” without the Ghost, as also the Ghost cannot be “known” without shining from Christ:

“The Ghost is the means and the intensity of knowing the transcendent divinity; Christ, as Logos, is the structured content of this knowledge.”⁷⁷

The lack of a just vision of the relations between the Son and the Holy Ghost, as also amongst all the Persons of the Holy Trinity, doesn’t make the salvation possible, rather it impedes it. The unbalanced religious conceptions, which don’t receive the teaching of the Church in its integrality, they lead to roving and heresies.

To be saved we must live spiritually, namely to “live” into the Holy Ghost. Father Stăniloae tells us that:

⁷⁶ Ibid. Father Stăniloae quotes, in the continuation of the same place, from Saint Gregory of Nazianzus: “Consummate Trinity of three consummate Ones, for the monad moving due to its richness, but exceeding the twoness (for it is above matter and shape, out of which the bodies are made), it is defined as Trinity (for it is the first one which exceeds the composition of the twoness), to not be the Godhead either narrow or ceaselessly overflowing. This is because the first thing shows lack of generosity, and the second one is the disorder; and the first one is totally Judaic, and the second one pagan and polytheistic.”

⁷⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Relațiile Treimice și viața Bisericii” („The Trinitarian Relations and the Life of the Church”, *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, 4 / 1964, p. 512.

“The Holy Ghost is lived as a spiritual fluidity which raises from us and elevates us towards God in an increasing understanding and love.”⁷⁸

The proceeding of the Holy Ghost doesn't stop, it doesn't become static; once *proceeded* the Ghost doesn't end, neither diminishes; the spiritual flux mentioned by Father Stăniloae it is a continuous one, but we can live it only as long as we receive the Ghost in close connection with the Son:

“(...) by receiving the Ghost of Christ the believers do not receive Him outside Christ, the Ghost is not at a distance from Christ when He connects the believer to Christ, but the Ghost is into Christ.”⁷⁹

By losing the connection between the Holy Ghost and Christ – Whom the Occident no longer sees One in Another, without mixing but also without separation, due to the fact that it loses from the sight the perichoresis – the Western theologians affirm a presence of the Holy Ghost, but without the presence of Christ, and thus they reach to speak about the “Christological-institutional priesthood and the pneumatological general priesthood”⁸⁰.

We encounter here again, related to the clarification of the mentioned aspect, the unmatched capacity of expression of the theological language of Father Stăniloae:

*“(...) (the believers, o. n.), being united with Christ, they stand **under the resting of the Ghost**, together with Christ”⁸¹.*

Our union with Christ makes us partakers to the Holy Ghost according to our measures and, in the same time, this partaking of the Ghost elevates us, even more, in the union

⁷⁸ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Relațiile Treimice și viața Bisericii” („The Trinitarian Relations and the Life of the Church”, *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, 4 / 1964, p. 513).

⁷⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Relațiile Treimice și viața Bisericii” („The Trinitarian Relations and the Life of the Church”, *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, 4 / 1964, p. 513).

⁸⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Relațiile Treimice și viața Bisericii” („The Trinitarian Relations and the Life of the Church”, *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, 4 / 1964, p. 514).

⁸¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Relațiile Treimice și viața Bisericii” („The Trinitarian Relations and the Life of the Church”, *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, 4 / 1964, p. 513).

with Christ, in an ascending and continuous spiral; the two categories – the union with Christ, and our betterment into the Ghost – constitute a single continuous process, the two qualities potentiating to each other. But this takes place in the Church of Christ, where the believers are the limbs of His mysterious Body.

Although the believers must tend as more as possible, and then increasingly more, towards accomplishing, between them and the Trinitarian Persons, of the same relations of consummate love which is manifested in the intra-Trinitarian relations, we still are unable to participate to that type of relations with the Persons of the Holy Trinity except “*through grace, namely through impartation, or through work*”⁸².

It emerges here the problem of expressing the presence and the manifestations of Christ within Saints as *shininess* of the Holy Ghost within them. We must mention here that the shininess of the Holy Ghost within the Saints it is on the measure of the presence of Christ within them, and that the presence of the Holy Ghost within them is a partial one, and not as whole Hypostasis as in Christ. In Christ, the Holy Ghost shines wholly. In Saints, the Holy Ghost shines on the measure of their deification.

When the capacity of the Church, of perceiving, of receiving, and of explaining the Holy Ghost, it is decreasing, by granting a too big importance to the logical demarche done by the human mind, there emerge the juridism and the churchly institutionalism. Likewise, the individualistic religious life it occurs when one tries to live Christ in the absence of the Holy Ghost. Behold how Father Stăniloae expresses the relations between the Persons of the Most-Holy Trinity:

*“The Ghost, He is the love of the Father towards the Son, Who, by placing Himself upon the Son, He comes back to the Father, as love of the Son towards the Father.”*⁸³

⁸² Dumitru Stăniloae, „Relațiile Treimice și viața Bisericii” („The Trinitarian Relations and the Life of the Church”, *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, *Ortodoxia*, 4 / 1964, p. 515

⁸³ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Relațiile Treimice și viața Bisericii” („The Trinitarian Relations and the Life of the Church”, *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, 4 / 1964, p. 516.

Analyzing the affirmations of Saint Gregory Palamas concerning the Trinitarian relations, Father Stăniloae tells us that:

“The proceeding of the Ghost is (...) in a special connection with the birth of the Son”⁸⁴; “The Ghost in Trinity is the One Who brings the Father and the Son to unity”⁸⁵.

The love of the Son, through the Ghost, for the Father, it does not lead to dissolving the Trinitarian Persons One into Another, but the Son remains born from the Father, and the Ghost remains proceeded from the Father. The perichoresis does not lead to confounding.

Father Stăniloae, by comparatively analyzing the affirmations of Patriarch Gregory the Cypriote and the ones of Saint Gregory Palamas, he shows that the second Churchly Holy Father brings new clarifications to the fact that the Ghost proceeds from the Father, as love of the Father for the Son, and rests – shines – from the Son as love of the Son for the Father, but not having His origin in the Son. The turning back of the love of the Son towards the Father takes place because the Son *“is not a passive object of the paternal love”*⁸⁶.

Through the embodiment of the Son, Who assumes the human nature – except the sin -, the Father, by loving the Son, He loves all the people united with the Son, so that the Ghost of God becomes present, shines, and rests upon all people, according to their measures of spiritual advancement. Father Stăniloae shows how the union into the Holy Ghost it means salvation:

“All people are loved into the Son by the Father and all of them respond with the love of the Son. This is the culminating moment of the state of salvation: the union of everybody with Christ into the Ghost and through this the feeling of the love of the Father

⁸⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Relațiile Treimice și viața Bisericii” („The Trinitarian Relations and the Life of the Church”, *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, 4 / 1964, p. 516.

⁸⁵ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Relațiile Treimice și viața Bisericii” („The Trinitarian Relations and the Life of the Church”, *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, 4 / 1964, p. 516.

⁸⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Relațiile Treimice și viața Bisericii” („The Trinitarian Relations and the Life of the Church”, *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, 4 / 1964, p. 517.

*towards them and theirs towards the Father. That's why **salvation is the recapitulation into Christ**. All people are loved into the Son by the Father and all of them respond into the Son with the love of the Son, for, being into the Son, upon all of them hovers the Ghost of the Father and out of all of them shines the Ghost to the Father.”⁸⁷*

By hovering, from Christ, upon us, the Holy Ghost doesn't leave Christ, doesn't diminish in Him; Christ, when imparting us with the Ghost, He doesn't “lose”, neither diminishes the Ghost, but through this, the believers are united with Christ, and they are adopted by the Father, and they inherit the Kingdom of God.

The embodiment of the Word of God, His coming within world and amongst people, the assuming of the human nature, all these mighty works have, as finality, the salvation of the people, their bringing again into the love of the Father, as sons, through adoption; and, as sons, they inherit the heavenly kingdom. The two sides, the adoption and the inheriting of the kingdom, they mustn't be separated, for they are manifestations of the same paternal love, both of them leading to salvation.

The second theologian whose doctrine is analyzed by Father Stăniloae, Josif Vrijenije, he conceives the Trinitarian relations as being of an even greater complexity. By analyzing the names of the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity, Father Josif shows that there is a difference amongst the characteristics of the Trinitarian Hypostases, characteristics which are incommunicable and absolutely specific. Thus, only the Father is Source of the Proceeding, and Causative, and Initiator, while the Son and the Word is born by the Father, and the Ghost is proceeded; so that the causative and initiator principle is only the Father. The Son and the Holy Ghost are “caused” and “together-caused”⁸⁸. The mentioned theologian

⁸⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Relațiile Treimice și viața Bisericii” („The Trinitarian Relations and the Life of the Church”, *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, 4 / 1964, p. 517. Father Stăniloae quotes Saint Cyril of Alexandria “(...) through Christ and into Christ we have received the blessing, being sealed towards adoption through the Holy Ghost” (*Închinare în Duh și adevăr (Worshipping in Ghost and Truth)*, book IX, P.G., t. LXVIII).

⁸⁸ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Relațiile Treimice și viața Bisericii” („The Trinitarian Relations and the Life of the Church”, *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, 4 / 1964, p. 519.

accentuates the quality of the Persons of the Son and of the Ghost to be “cause”, as also Their quality of not being “causative”; and the Father is only “causative and not caused”⁸⁹.

The Son and the Ghost have a common Cause, but in the same time a different character of Their Persons. In the quote chosen by Father Stăniloae, Josif Vrijenije shows that the Son is Son only to the Father, but He is also Word of the Ghost, and the Ghost is proceeding only from the Father but it is also Ghost of the Son.

In what concerns the relations of communion, the Persons of the Holy Trinity have perfect relations, in comparison to which, the relations amongst people are only obscure images. The relations amongst the Persons of the Holy Trinity are not manifested as These Persons would be isolated, but through perichoresis; each Person potentiates “*the showing of the divine fulness in own form*”⁹⁰ in the other Trinitarian Persons. The relation between the Ghost and the Son is seen by Josif Vrijenije as a two-way relation, characteristic synthesized by Father Stăniloae like this:

“(...) not only the Ghost passes through the Son, showing Himself as Ghost of the Son (...), but also the Son somehow passes through the Ghost, showing Himself as Word of the Ghost”⁹¹.

⁸⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Relațiile Treimice și viața Bisericii” („The Trinitarian Relations and the Life of the Church”, *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, 4 / 1964, p. 519).

⁹⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Relațiile Treimice și viața Bisericii” („The Trinitarian Relations and the Life of the Church”, *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, 4 / 1964, p. 520).

⁹¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Relațiile Treimice și viața Bisericii” („The Trinitarian Relations and the Life of the Church”, *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, 4 / 1964, p. 520). We observe also here, as in the whole Christian theology, the difficulty of perceiving the Persons of the Holy Trinity and of the relations from amongst them. A special difficulty is represented by the perceiving of the Person of the Holy Ghost, for the human mind imagines the Father and the Son as human persons of different ages; the Holy Ghost is compared by the Holy Scripture, to a dove and to tongues of fire (and then, might be also a representation of the Holy Ghost, as the fire which burns the pyre without consuming it – the Ghost descends as a fire upon the Holy Virgin, Who conceives the Son without sin, namely without being consumed under the action of the fire / the Ghost). In the same time, even we tell that the love amongst the Persons of the Holy Trinity and their perichoresis annuls any hierarchy of Those Persons, though, the human mind, at a first glimpse, grants primacy to the Father, the Son following as importance, and finally coming the Holy Ghost. All our considerations from above, regarding the imagining of the Holy Trinity, are wrong and totally not recommended; the Holy Fathers advice us, when praying, to not imagine anything. See in this sense: Priest Prof. PhDumitru Vasile Vlad, „*Rugăciune și*

Behold how Father Stăniloae describes the relation amongst the Persons of the Holy Trinity:

“The Son remains Word of the Father as coming from the Father; and the Ghost speaks the Word of the Father, or the Son of the Father speaks from the Ghost. Namely, the content of the speaking of the Ghost is Christ, and Christ speaks from the Ghost. And more, by speaking the Word of the Father, the Ghost speaks about the Father; the Son by speaking from the Ghost, He speaks from the Ghost or from the power of the Father. Each relation between two Persons involves also the third Person.”⁹²

But the consequence of resting and of shining of the Ghost upon/from the Son, it is the fact that the Ghost rests and shines also in the Church of Christ, for Christ is the Head of the Church, and the Church is His Body. And through this, the Ghost rests upon and shines into believers, as they are limbs of the Church of Christ, and thus, through the mediation of the Embodied Son, the believers are imparted with the Holy Ghost, namely with the *“ultimate and absolute source of the existence, Who the Father is”*⁹³. But, Father Stăniloae specifies: this impartation of the believers it doesn't take place according to the nature, as the Father and the Son impart themselves, but according to the grace.

Father Stăniloae shows that Saint John Damascene interprets the perichoresis as resting of the Trinitarian Persons, of One into Another/the Others, and not only as a *“gravitation”* of those Persons One around Another / the Others. The plenitude of the Persons of the Holy Trinity *“feels⁹⁴ the passing through the others”*⁹⁵.

Imaginație. O perspectivă bisericească” (Prayer and Imagination. A Churchly Perspective), Renașterea Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca, 2013.

⁹² Dumitru Stăniloae, „Relațiile Treimice și viața Bisericii” („The Trinitarian Relations and the Life of the Church”, *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, 4 / 1964, p. 520.

⁹³ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Relațiile Treimice și viața Bisericii” („The Trinitarian Relations and the Life of the Church”, *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, 4 / 1964, p. 516, p. 521.

⁹⁴ We are using here the translation proposed to us by Univ. Lect. Loredana Pungă, whom we asked for her kind help, as the only solution we have find. Here we have a partial

Starting from the Trinitarian relations, and from their manifestation within Church, and from the influence these relations have upon the Church, Father Stăniloae concludes that:

“The True Church is Christological, and pneumatological, institutional and eventful, in the same time, or it is Christological for it is pneumatological, and vice versa”⁹⁶.

Christ and the Holy Ghost work within Church for making us sons of the Father, for imparting us the perfect relations amongst the Trinitarian Persons, and the perfect love amongst these Persons, namely to save us. That's why salvation takes place within Church, and the Church, due to the complex processes, and to the diverse works, adapted to the needs of each believer considered as person, it is a laboratory of salvation.

Father Stăniloae explains a two-ways relation between the Church's institution, and the presence of the Son and of the Ghost within Church. Thus, he doesn't consider the Church's institution as being only a neutral frame within which the grace is being received, but also as **created by the work of the grace**. A Church which is spiritually strong, it is the expression of the presence of the Son and of the Holy Ghost within it, and a weak Church shows itself being incapable of receiving the Son and the Ghost, for it has gone far from Them. But the “power” of the Church mustn't be confounded to a dry, non-spiritual institutionalism, respectively to the worldly “power” institutionalized in a

conveying of the meaning of the expression „*se resimte*” from the Romanian original. Collateral meanings would be connoted by using the expression „*it is influenced*”, but this expression still is inappropriate because includes the *passivity* aspect, which is wrong when speaking about the Persons of the Holy Trinity. We neither can use „*it is increased*”, or “*improved*” or “*it is enhanced*” (the plenitude), for nothing can be increased or changed to the Persons of the Holy Trinity, They being infinite and „*(...) to Whom there is no change or shadow of moving.*” (James 1: 17). Maybe the most appropriate equivalent, as His Eminence, Bishop Emilian Lovișteanu told us, it would be the French reflexive verb *se ressentir* used in the locution *il se ressent*.

⁹⁵ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Relațiile Treimice și viața Bisericii” („The Trinitarian Relations and the Life of the Church”, *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, 4 / 1964, p. 521).

⁹⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Relațiile Treimice și viața Bisericii” („The Trinitarian Relations and the Life of the Church”, *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, 4 / 1964, p. 522)

churchly manner. Our Savior commands us: “Search first for the Kingdom of God and for His righteousness and all of these will be given to you”⁹⁷; and we must understand from here the fact that the power of the Church, even when extended upon some aspects of the human society, must come from the working of the commandments, by its limbs, and not from searching for the worldly things; namely, from the holiness of the Church’s servants towards the world, and not inversely.

Father Stăniloae quotes an English Presbyterian theologian, Thomas F. W. Torrence, who, in his study entitled *Spiritus Creator* shows that:

*“The Holy Ghost doesn’t come to us in His own name, but in the name of Christ... That’s why, this is also the mode in which we know Him and think about Him and speak about Him... if we do not take heed at this, then, being given the fact that the Holy Ghost hides Himself, we fall into the error of confounding Him to the Church in the sphere of which we place the Ghost, either to the human heart.”*⁹⁸

Father Stăniloae completes the warning of the mentioned theologian, by reiterating the teaching of Saint Anthony the Great, who says that:

*”(...) If we do not know the Ghost through the objectivity of the consubstantiality with the Son, and of the Son with the Father, in Whom and through Whom our minds are directed far from ourselves, towards the unique source and principle of the Divinity, we inevitably absorb ourselves into us, and we confound the Holy Ghost to our own spirit, and we confound the one truth of God to our notions and imaginings.”*⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Matthew 6: 33; Luke: 12: 31.

⁹⁸ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Relațiile Treimice și viața Bisericii” („The Trinitarian Relations and the Life of the Church”, *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*), p. 523.

⁹⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Relațiile Treimice și viața Bisericii” („The Trinitarian Relations and the Life of the Church”, *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*), p. 523.

Namely, even if we inappropriate Him, in a certain measure, through grace, and, even if the Ghost gives Himself to us, due to His godlike love, He remains God, and One of the Trinity, and He doesn't "belong" to us, and He doesn't take upon Him our human features; through working the commandments, and due to the mercy of God, it can happen that the Ghost to rest Himself upon us, and to shine from within us; but He doesn't confound Himself to us.

Father Stăniloae explains the text of Saint Athanasius the Great, like this:

*"In other words, besides the indissoluble relation of the Ghost and of the embodied Son, we are incapable to distinguish the objective reality of the Lord God - the Creator of the edges of the world - from (our, o. n.) subjective moods, or from our own creative spirituality."*¹⁰⁰

By considering, in a wrong manner, the Trinitarian relations, and their influence upon and within some churches, it constitutes a major danger in the way of the believers' salvation, because in such cases, those "churches" themselves are the ones who determine the believers to be astray, and waste the efforts of the believers done in order to be saved. Trusting the human mind too much, considering human doctrines and intellectual tendencies as absolute – as it is being done by scholastics – it leads to losing the Ghost and, in the same time, to lose the partaking with the Son.

Father Stăniloae agrees the affirmations of the mentioned before English theologian, who shows that:

"This was the persistent error of the Romanism (Catholicism) and of the Protestantism: the first one confounds the Ghost of God to the spirit of the Church and replaces, to say, Filioque for Ecclesiaque, and the second one confounds the Ghost of God to the human spirit and replaces, sort of speaking, Filioque for homineque. Thus, the knowledge through the Ghost is dissolved in the subjectivity of the church, or

¹⁰⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Relațiile Treimice și viața Bisericii” („The Trinitarian Relations and the Life of the Church”, *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, 4 / 1964, p. 523).

of the individual, and the products of this collective or individual conscience are seen as works of the Ghost”^{101, 102}.

Referring to the difficulty of perceiving the Holy Ghost, and of the conception related to the Holy Ghost, Father Stăniloae shows that the human errors come just because this difficulty of the limited human mind:

“(...) this happened due to the fact that one has tried to cogitate the Ghost according to the image of the Father and of the Son – as able to be through Himself -, whilst the Ghost is only the capacity given us for knowing God the Creator, the Father, or the Son. By trying to notice the Ghost Himself, without Christ, because the Ghost in Himself cannot be noticed, we remain with our pure subjectivity.”¹⁰³

I. 3. Church – Pyre Lit by Christ¹⁰⁴

Rejecting the teaching of the Church, and contriving an own faith, it is a manifestation of our vain glory. Humbly receiving the teaching of the Church it is the beginning and the continuation of the salvation.

Christ comes to save us. Christ comes to bring the union of everybody into Him, and by being Him the Head of the Church, and the Church being His Body, we can receive the salvation only within Church, and by no means outside it.

¹⁰¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Relațiile Treimice și viața Bisericii” („The Trinitarian Relations and the Life of the Church”, *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, 4 / 1964, p. 523).

¹⁰² We would dare to add here that both fallings are Pharisaism. The Savior warns us about both fallings: „And He was telling them: Well, you have rejected the commandment of God, in order to live according to your tradition!” and, „And thus you abolish the word of God with your tradition which you have established by yourselves. And you do many things like these.” (Mark 7: 9, 13); the corresponding verses from KJB are: “And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. // Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye.”

¹⁰³ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Relațiile Treimice și viața Bisericii” („The Trinitarian Relations and the Life of the Church”, *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, 4 / 1964, p. 524).

¹⁰⁴ Title taken from: Dumitru Stăniloae, *Iisus Hristos lumina lumii și îndumnezeitorul omului (Jesus Christ the Light of the World and the Deifier of the Man)*, Anastasia Publishing House, 1993, Bucharest.

Of course that, one must not consider “being within Church” only as a matter of space or place, because due to objective reasons – illness, travelling – we can be temporarily impeded to be physically present in a place of cult. But being absent - when nothing impedes us to be present – from the Holy Liturgy, it jeopardizes our salvation. The closeness to the Holy Mysteries, participation to the Church’s life, behold the way the ones who want to be saved must walk.

Father Stăniloae in his work entitled *Iisus Hristos lumina lumii și îndumnezeitorul omului (Jesus Christ, the Light of the World and the Deifier of the Man)*¹⁰⁵, in the sub-chapter *Biserica, rugul aprins de focul lui Hristos și sfesnic călăuzitor spre veșnica împărătie a lui Dumnezeu (Church – Pyre Lit by the Fire of Christ and Guiding Candlestick towards the Eternal Kingdom of God)*¹⁰⁶, he presents again the fundamental dogmatic theses which guided his faith during the whole time his holiness lived on earth.

By analyzing the comprising and expressive title of the mentioned chapter, we see that it is a very powerful double metaphor. The fire of the sacrificial love of Christ, the fire of His godlike love for man, it sets in fire the *pyre of His Church*, and this lit fire, through which Christ – the Light of the world – lightens, being Himself the *Light of the world*, He guides the believers towards the *eternal Kingdom of God*, namely towards salvation.

The word fire is uttered in the four Gospels for 36 times. The most often this word it is used with the meanings of punishment, of cleaning up the mistake or the sin, and of final destination for the sinners. But it also has the meaning of way towards salvation through the Baptism of the Holy Ghost, and of guidance.

A verse of an absolute force of expression is: “*Fire I have come to throw on earth and how I want now to be lit!*”¹⁰⁷ This fire thrown by Christ on earth is the one which lit the pyre of His Church, within which we are called to be saved.

¹⁰⁵ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Iisus Hristos lumina lumii și îndumnezeitorul omului (Jesus Christ the Light of the World and the Deifier of the Man)*, Anastasia Publishing House, 1993, Bucharest, 1993, p. 213.

¹⁰⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Iisus Hristos lumina lumii și îndumnezeitorul omului (Jesus Christ the Light of the World and the Deifier of the Man)*, p. 213.

¹⁰⁷ Luke 12: 49. The corresponding verse from KJB is: „I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled?”

Father Stăniloae shows in this sense that:

“After Christ resurrected and ascended to heavens and sat on the right hand of the Father, He doesn’t remain separated from us, but He comes through the Holy Ghost within the believers united with Him and He works within them the fire of love for God and people, leading them towards the Kingdom of the Holy Trinity or towards their eternal communion with Him.”¹⁰⁸

...that meaning our salvation, we would dare to add here.

Of a vital importance it is, in the quoted fragment, the word “communion”, which must be understood both horizontally with the fellow humans, and vertically with God. For Christ comes to heal the man’s egotistical closing into the self, closing caused by the deadly sin of our pride, through which we want to keep control upon our ego. Christ comes and asks us to entrust ourselves to His hands and to receive in communion the teaching of the Church:

“He is not in the believers who are isolated or separated from Him, due to different opinions about Him. For He came (...) to unite ourselves in Him, namely in the same faith in Him, Who is but only One and the Same; or in Him as the Truth, or as the Son of God becomes man, being able to comprise as state all people and everything. This is because the Son of God becomes man, to gather into God His whole creation, and not to divide it. The Church is, therefore, the union of the ones who believe in the One and true Christ”¹⁰⁹.

Here we must say that life in monasticism must not be confounded to the isolation from the Church. The monks, even the ascetics and the anchorites, they are in connection with

¹⁰⁸ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Iisus Hristos lumina lumii și îndumnezeitorul omului (Jesus Christ the Light of the World and the Deifier of the Man)*, p. 213.

¹⁰⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Iisus Hristos lumina lumii și îndumnezeitorul omului (Jesus Christ the Light of the World and the Deifier of the Man)*, p. 213.

the Church; they secretly and mysteriously participate to the celebration of the Holy Mysteries; they are permanently, in a spiritually mode and even in a bodily way, inside the Church, and members of the Church.

By participating to the Holy Religious Services, we “touch” Christ, and we heal the wounds of our sins, due to His presence within His Church; and thus, this participation as limbs of the Church, this appurtenance to the Church’s body, it is savior to us.

Father Stăniloae always urges us, with spiritual love, to gather ourselves together in the Church of Christ, for:

“By gathering themselves together, as Church, the ones who believe in the Same Christ, they are sanctified from the sanctified humanity of Christ. They are sanctified through the Holy Mysteries through which they unite themselves with Him, by receiving the grace, or His uncreated work. Jesus Christ prays, therefore, the Father, by saying: “As You have sent Me in the world, also I have sent them in the world. For them I sanctify Myself, for they to be sanctified into truth. But I do not pray only for those ones, but also for the ones who will believe in Me through their word, for all of them to be one, as You, Father, into Me and I into You, so also those ones to be in Us one, for the world to see that You have sent Me”¹¹⁰. (Ioan 17, 18-21)¹¹¹

In the same time, Father Stăniloae urges us to remain within the savior unity of the Church, for there we are united with Christ. His holiness says that:

¹¹⁰ In KJB we have John 17: 18-21: “As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. // And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. // Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; // That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.”; Romanian Orthodox theology calls the text from John 17: 1-26, (so the whole chapter), as “**Hierarchal Prayer of the Lord**”.

¹¹¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Iisus Hristos lumina lumii și îndumnezeitorul omului (Jesus Christ the Light of the World and the Deifier of the Man)*, p. 214.

“Everybody must remain united with Him, for He is the One Truth, from Whom is spread out the unifying love.”¹¹²

He also warns the ones, who seek for division and autonomous isolation, that:

“The ones who do not love the unity into Christ, they show, even through this, that they are not into Truth, or in the True Christ, that they have come out from Paradise, and they haven’t united with the Good One.”¹¹³

And whether we do not want the unity of the Church, and whether we do not want to unite ourselves with the Church of Christ, then we can’t unite ourselves either with Christ, and therefore we can’t be saved.

Father Stăniloae compares the Church to a lit pyre, composed of candles, who are the believers, not only when are done the churchly prayers in common, but also when the believers pray individually. The Church of Christ is composed of believers and it manifests Itself in the world through their good works. We are within the Church of Christ if we fulfill His commandments, and if we receive Christ through the Holy Mysteries of the Church. Through the Holy Mysteries Christ works within Church, The Holy Ghost remains within Church, and the Church remains alive. In this sense, Father Stăniloae says that:

“All of them are (the believers, o. n.), thus, branches of the same pyre, lit by the love for people of the same Christ, or of His Ghost, received through the Holy Mysteries.”¹¹⁴

The Church is – shows Father Stăniloae – the Kingdom of the Ghost, a Kingdom which is One, which is Saint, which is

¹¹² Dumitru Stăniloae, *Iisus Hristos lumina lumii și îndumnezeitorul omului* (Jesus Christ the Light of the World and the Deifier of the Man), p. 214.

¹¹³ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Iisus Hristos lumina lumii și îndumnezeitorul omului* (Jesus Christ the Light of the World and the Deifier of the Man), p. 214.

¹¹⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Iisus Hristos lumina lumii și îndumnezeitorul omului* (Jesus Christ the Light of the World and the Deifier of the Man), p. 214.

Apostolic, and which is Universal. Christ is always present within His Church, Church within which, the hearts of the believers are like some lit candles, and the Church is a pyre within which always burn the flames of the love of the Holy Ghost.

I. 4. The Mysterious Reality of the Church - the Life in Its Fulness¹¹⁵

Father Stăniloae considers that the whole existence is a mystery. All the elements composing the seen world, the people from the world, all of these are mysteries which can be known in some degree, but not in their wholeness, neither in their essence. The surrounding things, the beings, and the phenomena, not only that escape human understanding, but they either cannot be produced by man. The man's control, upon the surrounding world, it is relative and a very limited one.

What we would like to nuance here, referring to the Father's Stăniloae considerations, are the aspects stated by him concerning the insufficiencies and the imperfections¹¹⁶ of the world and of the human beings, due to which the human needs are only partially satisfied. In fact, we think that him doesn't try to affirm that God created the world and the human as imperfect, because in this case God would be an imperfect Creator, but rather he tries to highlight the fact that

¹¹⁵ Title paraphrased after Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica și viața – Realitatea tainică a Bisericii” („Church and Life – the Mysterious Reality of the Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 3 / 1984.

¹¹⁶ Father Stăniloae, in the presentation he makes too the Volume no. II of the Romanian Philokalia, he being the author of the translation and putting together of this huge work, when referring to the essences which constitute the frame of the theological conception of Saint Maximos the Confessor, he shows that: “Out of the whole system of Saint Maximos it detaches a great trust in nature and in the natural rationality. Everything is made by God according to a rationality and everything is understood and committed, normally, according to a rationality. Only the passion is irrational, for it wasn't created by God.” (Dumitru Stăniloae, *Filocalia Română (The Romanian Philokalia)*, Humanitas Publishing House, Bucharest, 1999, Third Edition, vol. II, p. 24); in the quoted volume, Saint Maximos the Confessor repeatedly speaks about the “simple meanings of the things”, simple in the sense that they are pure, as they were created by God, without being mixed with the passions, which bring perversion, corruption, and death. (Dumitru Stăniloae, *Filocalia Română (The Romanian Philokalia)*, vol. II, Maximos the Confessor, *Cele patru sute de capete despre dragoste (The Four Hundred Heads about Love)*; *Cuvânt înainte către Elpidie (Foreword towards Elpidios)*).

the world and the humans have not the same perfection as their Creator. Even his holiness completes his sayings by affirming that the world and the people: "cannot be the ultimate reality" ¹¹⁷; "they do not present themselves to us as an absolute existence" ¹¹⁸.

In the second paragraph of the article we are analyzing here, Father Stăniloae adds also:

*"(...) the insufficiencies of the world are not necessarily shown through its created character itself. The transcendent and absolute Creator could fill it with His perfections. These insufficiencies are actualized through the liberty of the human beings as conscious creatures. God, the Creator and the Sustainer of the world, He has made that the world's full participation to His perfections to depend on the freedom of the conscious beings, for whom He created the world."*¹¹⁹

We can draw here the conclusion that, the more the man is bettered, the more he sees the world perfect for himself; and then the world becomes, increasingly more, depending of the enhancement of our spiritual measures, a the more efficient help for reaching at the **state of salvation**.

The mysterious character of the existence and of the human person comes just by this not-seeing their ultimate finality, of what is beyond them, of their ultimate Cause. World and man were created by God, but God is transcendent to them. The work of God, within world and upon the man, it deepens their mystery.

God is the Creator of the world and of the man, but He is in the same time their Sustainer, their Providence Doer. Even if we do not know Him in His ultimate essence, through His uncreated energies, we can partially understand His presence and work within world and upon man. Actually, we believe that the Mystery of the Church as Mystery of the Holy Trinity,

¹¹⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica și viața – Realitatea tainică a Bisericii” („Church and Life – the Mysterious Reality of the Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 3 / 1984, p. 416.

¹¹⁸ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica și viața – Realitatea tainică a Bisericii” („Church and Life – the Mysterious Reality of the Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 3 / 1984, p. 416.

¹¹⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica și viața – Realitatea tainică a Bisericii” („Church and Life – the Mysterious Reality of the Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 3 / 1984, p. 416.

it is impossible to be known by the human beings, but on the other hand, in some extent, according to each person's endeavors to work the commandments, we can ascend towards God, towards knowing Him; though, even in the future life, we won't know Him, and we won't reach to come close to His ultimate essence.

The mystery doesn't come from the fact that God hides Himself intentionally, but, due to our sins, and passions, we have misty eyes. We see God in this world through "symbol and riddles", as a Holy Churchly Father said. But the Church succeeds, in its effort to guide us on the way of the salvation, to "concretize" the mysteries of the connection between Creator and His creation, and it makes possible the ascension of the man towards God, and the receiving of the merciful descent of God towards man, namely ***the process of the salvation***.

The world, and the human beings, they become increasingly imperfect on the measure they get far from God. But, within Church, the inverse process – the advancing of the road of the salvation, namely the advancement towards God – it remains possible forever and ever.

Father Stăniloae identifies a causal determination between the mysterious character of the Creation and the misuse of freedom by the human beings, respectively the mystery becomes increasingly harder to be perceived by them who become more and more dominated by passions:

*"(...) the created conscious beings, by not using this dignity of the freedom in a positive sense, emerges both within them and the world a multitude of their ontological¹²⁰ insufficiencies as creatures, because the active presence of God within them diminishes with the will of the conscious beings, and through this the mysterious character of the creation is being weakened, in the same time with the man's capacity of noticing it."*¹²¹

¹²⁰ We insist again in expressing our belief concerning the *insufficiencies* of the creatures, by saying that the creatures were created perfect, namely they are potentially perfect. By misusing the freedom they *estrangle themselves from their perfection*, by their own will.

¹²¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica și viața – Realitatea tainică a Bisericii” („Church and Life – the Mysterious Reality of the Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 3 / 1984, p. 416.

In other words, the people, as rational and free beings, they break, by irrationally using their liberty, the creation of God, namely both the world and themselves. On the measure they advance in passions and in working the sin, they become increasingly imperfect and incapable to find God in the mystery of the Creation.

God created the world out of nothing and He created the man in His image and likeness, to fill them up with His perfection. The culminating point of this overflowing of the love of God, over the world and peoples, it was the embodiment of the Son in order to unite with Him (with the Holy Trinity) the human nature, making thus possible the deification of the human being, and the gathering of all created things to their Creator, namely their salvation. Christ is the Door, the people and the creation in general pass through, and through Whom, in the same time, God descends into His Mercy, towards people, for saving them. And Christ gave birth to His Church, the door passed through, towards God, by the ones who are saved. But, due to their passions and sins, the people, even the Saints, they receive salvation as a mystery, within the Mystery of the Church:

“Christ is the culminating central Mystery in continuous irradiation of power and of attraction of the people to the union with Himself, making of this union, whose focus is Him, the enlarged mystery of the Church. He is the continuous source, the flowing power within Church, ceaselessly sustaining the godlike life within Church. Through this, the ones who receive from His power, they become even more united than they have been before, not only with Him, but also amongst themselves. The flowing life from Christ, being a life of love, it enters them as another godlike Person, namely the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost warms the people up towards the love of Christ, and makes them feel His love of central Brother and instills them His filial love for the Father. By feeling all of them as brothers of the same Christ and sons of the same Father of Him, they also feel themselves brothers to each other. They enter through this a life of increasingly full communion,

increasingly animated by Christ, and spiritually articulating themselves as limbs of His body.”¹²²

And this Body of Him is His Church, whose Head is Him. Within Church, Christ:

*“(…) communicates the life of His resurrected humanity, preparing us also for resurrection. On this way, the Church is the spiritual place where Christ gradually communicates through His Holy and Life Maker Ghost, to our humanity, His resurrected humanity, and therefore its not-passing life. The Church is the place where we are being prepared towards resurrection and eternal life. It is the **laboratory** in which we are brought back to the advancing towards the own target of our salvation.”¹²³*

The Church is, therefore, the laboratory of our salvation.

“(…) the man is created for the eternal life” says Father Stăniloae, and therefore, for salvation. He highlights the fact that by being unique, each human has an individualized capacity of spiritual enriching, of receiving the Holy Ghost, and of receiving Christ. From here we deduce that also **the salvation of each person is an individualized process**, an individualized road to travel, of course, marked, from time to time, by trial, out of which to draw teaching, consequently to which to become kinder, so, through which to be us able to come the more closer to God. We can affirm here that, **the Church, seen as laboratory of salvation, it gives everybody the same thing, but each human being receives, as much as he is capable of, and in his individualized manner, this gift of the salvation.**

Within His Church Christ remains, mysteriously and eternally, in sacrificial state, urging us through His example to sacrifice ourselves too, by working the commandments, for

¹²² Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica și viața – Realitatea tainică a Bisericii” („Church and Life – the Mysterious Reality of the Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 3 / 1984, p. 417.

¹²³ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica și viața – Realitatea tainică a Bisericii” („Church and Life – the Mysterious Reality of the Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 3 / 1984, p. 417.

receiving, as gift, the salvation. Concerning this Father Stăniloae says:

“Our willing sacrifice doesn’t consist only in receiving death with the sentiment that we willingly surrender ourselves to the heavenly Father, but also in a fuller cleaning of the deeds of our sinful egotism. In this sense, Christ Who imparts Himself to us, in the state of the sacrifice brought to the Father, He “cleans the dead deeds from thought” (Hebrews 9: 14). Through this we become, increasingly full, sons of the Father together with Christ, and brothers amongst us.”¹²⁴

We must see the Church, from all our powers, as a living organism, as a living process, as a living laboratory, within which we are prepared and guided to be saved. ***The purpose of the man’s life is the salvation and this takes place in the spiritual laboratory of the Church.***

“The Church (is, o. n.), the anticipated Kingdom of God”¹²⁵. The Church prepares us “towards the consummate mystery in which “God will be everything in all things (I Corinthians 15: 28), when everybody will be brought, through the sacrifice of Christ, to the eternal consummation of the communion (Hebrews 10: 14)”¹²⁶. This process of preparation as traveling the way towards salvation, which takes place within “Church in its quality of all-comprising mystery”¹²⁷, it is possible for through the Church we receive the Holy Ghost and the Son.

The Orthodox Church preserves, undiminished, the faith in the true Christ and works the undiminished mysteries, as they were instituted at the Baptism of the Lord, by Christ Himself at the Last Supper, by Apostles, and by the Holy Tradition. Father Stăniloae, warns us concerning the danger the ones who deviate from the ***right and full true faith*** are

¹²⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica și viața – Realitatea tainică a Bisericii” („Church and Life – the Mysterious Reality of the Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 3 / 1984, p. 418.

¹²⁵ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica și viața – Realitatea tainică a Bisericii” („Church and Life – the Mysterious Reality of the Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 3 / 1984, p. 419.

¹²⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica și viața – Realitatea tainică a Bisericii” („Church and Life – the Mysterious Reality of the Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 3 / 1984, p. 419.

¹²⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica și viața – Realitatea tainică a Bisericii” („Church and Life – the Mysterious Reality of the Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 3 / 1984, p. 419.

in, because they aren't imparted by the full mystery of the Church of Christ, and, even if the possibility of the salvation is not totally denied to them:

*"Though, the ones who have a partial faith in the true Christ, and practice a **reduced impartation** of Him, through diminished sacraments, or emptied of the presence of Christ, because they weakened the unitary living in the mystery of the Church, they aren't totally outside this mystery. This is because through their quality of creatures, they are in some measure part of this mystery. But because they aren't either in the fulness of the mystery of the union of the Word of God with the creation, they are not being prepared for a full communion with Him **either in the future life**. Amongst the many places of the Father (John 14: 2) they will be in less luminous places, in less transparent ones, and in a less consummate communion with Christ and with the ones consummately united with Him. They won't be, either there, imparted with the fulness of the life of Christ, and with the spiritual richness of their fellow humans, who are in full communion with Christ, Who is totally transparent to those ones, as also those ones are to each other."*¹²⁸

The Church – the laboratory of the human beings' salvation –, when the believers, as limbs of it, they receive with faith and humbleness the work of the Holy Mysteries upon themselves, and the right teaching, it prepares those ones, by cleaning their sins, and by restoring them into Christ, for the wonderful epektasis, which starts in the present life and continues, for the ones who are saved, in the happy endlessness of the age to come.

¹²⁸ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica și viața – Realitatea tainică a Bisericii” („Church and Life – the Mysterious Reality of the Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 3 / 1984, p. 420.

I. 5. Universal and Synodial Church¹²⁹

We are saved within the Church of Christ. Is this a universal Church? But we belong to a Local Church, to the Romanian Orthodox Church. It is a Local Church a laboratory of salvation for its believers? Has a Local Church all the attributes granted by Christ, to lead its believers towards salvation?

In the previous chapter we have mentioned the affirmation of Father Stăniloae referring to the fact that, the ones who are in a diminished communion with Christ, due to the participation to partial and diminished Holy Mysteries, and therefore to a partial and diminished Mystery of the Church, they could be saved, but, as Father Stăniloae said, they will be in those places of the Kingdom of God which will be “*less luminous and less transparent*” to the love of God. This is because if we do not receive the whole Revelation, we do not draw our sap directly and fully from the vine, and we cannot bring forth the fully developed and ripen grapes¹³⁰.

A “church” cannot be laboratory of salvation if slips outside the truth and preaches a teaching no longer connected to the whole sap of the truth. The Church in its ensemble, and especially the theologians, they must watch over for the true Gospel of Christ to be preached, to transmit towards believers the message and the savior work, without blurring anything of what Christ commanded us. By renouncing to the truth of faith, by modifying it, by adapting it to justify the worldly deeds, we get far from the vine, we become fruitless offshoots, who won’t be saved by any means, but they will be cut off and they will be thrown into the eternal fire. A “church” that loses its savior work, it is no longer a laboratory of salvation, but a wolf clothed in sheep skins, which surrenders its believers to the enemy¹³¹.

Father Stăniloae warns us also, concerning the unity of the Church, about the danger represented by the ecumenism by all means, by the ecumenism for the sake of ecumenism, respectively by an ecumenism that brings prejudices to the

¹²⁹ Title taken from: Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica universală și sobornicească” („Universal and Synodial Church), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 2 / 1966.

¹³⁰ John 15: 1-8.

¹³¹ Matthew 10: 16: ROB: „Beware of liar prophets, who come to you in sheepskins, and inside they are ravening wolves.”; KJB: „Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.”

Church and to the truth of faith. And, in the same time, he warns us also about the opposite tendency, namely of rejecting the ecumenism as being from start an endeavor destined to fail. These kinds of attempts take place by:

“(...) theories which treat in a relativist spirit the thesaurus given by Christ through the Holy Apostles of His Church, from the beginning, and preserved with fidelity by the Orthodox Church, to these days.”¹³²

A first theory concerning the universality of the Church, theory analyzed by Father Stăniloae, would be that of the “so-called Eucharistic ecclesiology”¹³³, elaborated by Professor M. Afanassieff, which “opposes the Eucharistic ecclesiology to the universal ecclesiology”¹³⁴. In essence, both the Orthodox and the Catholic Churches consider themselves as being universal, as being keepers of the truth, and that’s why each one consider the another as being detached from the universal Church, and estranged from the truth. Each of the two Churches waits for the other one to come back to his bosom.

Father Stăniloae shows that Afanassieff identifies a first difference between the Eucharistic ecclesiology and the universal one in the fact that, in the first one, the Bishop is included in the Eucharistic assembly, but in the universal ecclesiology this one is not included in the Eucharistic assembly.

Father Stăniloae shows that, to a local Church, it is not necessary the appurtenance to a Universal Church “*to be a full Church*”¹³⁵. And this is because:

“(...) no matter where such a Eucharistic communion would be, gathered around a bishop, there is the

¹³² Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica universală și sobornicească” („Universal and Synodial Church), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 2 / 1966, p. 167.

¹³³ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica universală și sobornicească” („Universal and Synodial Church), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 2 / 1966, p. 167.

¹³⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica universală și sobornicească” („Universal and Synodial Church), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 2 / 1966, p. 167.

¹³⁵ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica universală și sobornicească” („Universal and Synodial Church), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 2 / 1966, p. 168.

*integral Church, not lacking any of the notes of the true and full Church.”*¹³⁶

According to Cyprian’s theory, shows M. Afanassieff, the attributes of the Church, respectively those of being One, Holy, Synodial, and Apostolic, are obtained by the local Churches through the appurtenance to the universal Church, which includes all the local Churches. Afanassieff affirms, though, that all the attributes mentioned above belong to the local Churches:

*“In quality of Body of Christ, the Church manifests itself in the whole its plenitude, in the Eucharistic assembly of the local Church, for Christ is present in Eucharist, in the plenitude of His body. Behold why the local Church possesses the whole plenitude of the Church; in other words, it is the Church of God into Christ. (...) The Church is where the Eucharist assembly is.”*¹³⁷

Father Stăniloae shows that Afanassieff is wrong when he affirms that the role of the bishop is reduced only to what relates to officiating the Eucharist, the other ministrations being “external” to the Church; this mistake comes from the fact that:

“(...) the bishop cannot be external to the Eucharistic community or to the Church either through the other ministrations: preaching the truth, shepherding the believers. In the end, officiating the Eucharist is related also to preserving the truth within Church. The Church is something complex and that’s why also the ministration of the Eucharist is in connection with everything that means Church. It may be true that all ministrations culminate in the officiating the Eucharist, and therefore they have in sight, ultimately, the Eucharist, but this doesn’t mean that officiating the Eucharist and the other Mysteries, it is

¹³⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica universală și sobornicească” („Universal and Synodial Church), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 2 / 1966, p. 168.

¹³⁷ Quoted from: M. Afanassieff, „Una sancta”, in *“Irenikon”*, 1963, no. 4, p. 454.

*the sole ministration. This is even because without bishop – and therefore without episcopate – there is no Church.”*¹³⁸

M. Afanassieff, quoted by Father Stăniloae, affirms that: “*From the beginning of its existence, each local Church affirms itself as autonomous and independent (...)*”¹³⁹

It is very interesting the quote taken by Father Stăniloae from the writing of B. Schultze, referring to Afanassieff’s vision:

*“Euclid’s mathematics is not applied here, for in ecclesiology, one plus one equals one too: despite all the multitude of local Churches, the Church remains one... Within Church, the unity and the plurality not only they are overcome, but one is contained in another. Therefore, if the local Church includes Christ as the plenitude within itself, a power upon Christ and a subordination of the local Churches one to another, there are no longer possible.”*¹⁴⁰

Father Stăniloae synthesized the affirmations of Afanassieff related to the union / unity of the Churches in a universal Church, namely by showing that this kind of unity must be a union into the Holy Ghost, into the true veneration of Christ, and not one of institutional nature, one which to give birth to relations of juridical nature:

“(...) acceptation by a local Church of what happens within other local Church, it hasn’t a juridical character, but it is a witness of that Church, into the Holy Ghost, that what happens within other local Church is from the Holy Ghost. (...) So, the same Ghost works differently within different local Churches and then the local Churches are kept in a

¹³⁸ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica universală și sobornicească” („Universal and Synodial Church), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 2 / 1966, p. 170.

¹³⁹ Quoted from: M. Afanassieff, „Una sancta”, în “*Irenikon*”, 1963, no. 4, p. 454.

¹⁴⁰ Quoted from: B. Schultze, “Ecclesiologia Universale o Eucaristica”, in “*Unitas*”, Jan.-March, 1965, p. 16.

reciprocal conditioning and completion, by One and the same Ghost.”¹⁴¹

We would dare to affirm that there is no bigger or smaller Church, for Christ through the Holy Ghost is fully present in any Church where is officiated, into truth and right faith, the Mystery of the Eucharist.

When analyzing the sayings of Afanassieff, Father Stăniloae shows that neither the other imbalance, that of isolating the local Churches, is beneficial.

The acception by the other local Churches of what happens in a certain local Church, and the fact that those local Churches must bear witness that what happens in that local Church it is from the Ghost, it gives unity to the Church, and recognition of the appurtenance of that specific Church to the Church of Christ. And vice-versa, if what happens in that particular Church is considered as not being from the Ghost, this fact will determine the other local Churches to not bear witness about the truth of that particular work.

Father Stăniloae rhetorically asks the question, if a local Church maintains its fulness as Church when affected by renewals which lead to roving? We would add the question, also rhetorical, if such a Church still is a laboratory of salvation:

“It emerges the problem: if within a local community occur not phenomena of regrettable practical life, and not passing “acts”, but renewals of faith of permanent duration, which aren’t from the Holy Ghost, and which cannot be supposed to stay next to the ecclesial character of this Church, because they trouble it in its being, because the Church cannot be considered as an Eucharistic entity floating in abstract (...) (then, o. n.), a Church troubled by new and wrong teachings, is that Church, still, a full Church?”¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica universală și sobornicească” („Universal and Synodial Church), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 2 / 1966, p. 170.

¹⁴² Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica universală și sobornicească” („Universal and Synodial Church), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 2 / 1966, p. 172.

At our turn, we consider that bringing renewals justified only by worldly and human reasons, it leads to the transgression of the commandments of Christ¹⁴³ and to bringing a diminished witness (and, because of this, a liar one), or of a one that is, intentionally, a liar one.

Human theorizing can lead us to fallings, which to fully kill our salvation, as the ones identified by Father Stăniloae, in the case of Afanassieff:

“According to him the Eucharist wouldn’t stay in connection with the truth; according to him the truth and the Eucharist would be two separated entities, as Christ from Eucharist wouldn’t be the Logos, or the Rationality of all rationalities, as the Eucharist wouldn’t stay, from a certain point of view, in the horizon of the truth, as it could be wrongly understood and practiced, and therefore inefficient, or without a full efficiency.”^{144 145}

Concluding the analysis of Afanassieff’s writing, Father Stăniloae observes that, even if, at a first sight, it would seem that it combats the Universal centralist Church, with its center at Rome, where the “successor” of Peter is, Afanassieff combats actually the Universal Church in general and, on the crooked way of his study, the mentioned theologian ends to wrongly declare a communion amongst the local Churches, respectively also between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, even if between these two there are irreconcilable doctrinal divergences. Afanassieff reaches at this by affirming that: *“each of them is Church in its plenitude”*, *“by the simple fact that*

¹⁴³ Matthew 23: 23: “(...) These things you must do and do not leave those things”; Luke 11: 42: “(...) These things you owed to do and those things to let aside”.

¹⁴⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica universală și sobornicească” („Universal and Synodial Church), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 2 / 1966, p. 172.

¹⁴⁵ This affirmation of Father Stăniloae is worthy to be the subject of an ample study (corroborated also with that one of his holiness, when he says that, the believers offered by the Church with a partial truth, they will stay in „less luminous places and in less transparent places in the Kingdom of God”). Can we speak about a “partial salvation”? Can be considered, some local Churches, which transmit to their believers a partial or modified “Revelation”, as laboratory of a “partial salvation”?

*they have as leader a bishop and they celebrate the Eucharist*¹⁴⁶.

The ecumenism must avoid searching for a union by all means, and in any conditions, of the local Churches, respectively even by preaching a partial revelation, fact that would bring damages to the Church of Christ, and the believers would becomes the subjects upon whom the Church, in its quality of laboratory of salvation, would do damaging and harmful experiments.

Father Stăniloae analyzes also the affirmations of the theologian A. Schmemann, about a *universalist-primacy Eucharistic ecclesiology*¹⁴⁷.

A. Schmemann, says Father Stăniloae, takes the term of *Eucharistic ecclesiology* but he doesn't oppose it to the universal ecclesiology, trying instead to combine them, the result being a universal ecclesiology on Eucharistic basis, and not on a juridical basis. But, as Father Stăniloae shows, the mentioned theologian reaches also him at: (...) *an acception – but now in a direct form – o some primacy of the pope*¹⁴⁸.

In what regards the continuity with the apostolic ghost, and with the one of the early church, Father Stăniloae shows that: *"The Christian East preserved in a greater measure the spirit of the early Christendom"*¹⁴⁹.

Within Orthodox Church *"the authority of the Bishop is the highest authority and there is no other superior to it"*¹⁵⁰, this authority being based on *"his charisma (the one of the bishop, o. n.), of presiding the Eucharistic assembly and of making possible the celebration of the Eucharist"*¹⁵¹, whilst the Roman-Catholics affirm a power superior to that of the bishop – a

¹⁴⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica universală și sobornicească” („Universal and Synodial Church), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 2 / 1966, p. 173.

¹⁴⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica universală și sobornicească” („Universal and Synodial Church), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 2 / 1966, p. 174.

¹⁴⁸ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica universală și sobornicească” („Universal and Synodial Church), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 2 / 1966, p. 175.

¹⁴⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica universală și sobornicească” („Universal and Synodial Church), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 2 / 1966, p. 175.

¹⁵⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica universală și sobornicească” („Universal and Synodial Church), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 2 / 1966, p. 175.

¹⁵¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica universală și sobornicească” („Universal and Synodial Church), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 2 / 1966, p. 175.

“juridical non-sacramental power”¹⁵², on which the universality of the Church would be founded. The power of the Orthodox Church emanates from its grace, from the presence of Christ, from the work of the Holy Ghost, whilst the power of the Catholic Church receives a worldly character, an administrative one. Within Catholic Church we speak about a:

“Jurisdictional primacy power, affirmed as independent and superior to the sacramental power, so also to the Eucharistic assembly or to the Eucharistic Body of Christ.”¹⁵³

Namely the worldly climbed, through human vain glory, above the sacred. Father Stăniloae describes this situation using the following attributes:

“(…) ecclesiological universalism, or supra-ecclesiological and supra-Eucharistic ecclesiology universalism, of juridical character, which has found an exaggerated expression in the Catholic doctrine and in which the local Churches are considered as inferior component parts, of the Universal Church”¹⁵⁴, and the bishops are inferior to the pope.

Father Stăniloae shows that Schmemann reaches though, to a Universalist ecclesiology, even if it is a Eucharistic-Universalist one. Schmemann affirms that the local Churches aren't inferior component parts of the Universal Church, but then he nuances his own affirmation and considers that each local Church is the manifestation of the Universal Church and, in the same time, these local Churches cannot live in isolation.

Without theandric-ism, the Church of Christ cannot exist, because the theandric-ism is characteristic to Christ, and Christ is the head of His Church. Father Stăniloae affirms that *“just this ontology of the Church as theandric unity,*

¹⁵² Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica universală și sobornicească” („Universal and Synodial Church), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 2 / 1966, p. 175.

¹⁵³ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica universală și sobornicească” („Universal and Synodial Church), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 2 / 1966, p. 175.

¹⁵⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica universală și sobornicească” („Universal and Synodial Church), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 2 / 1966, p. 175.

*embodied wholly and indivisibly in each Church, it finds the connection between Churches*¹⁵⁵ ¹⁵⁶.

Schmemann, despite valuable considerations he makes, he affirms, though, the necessity of a primacy, starting from the primacy of the Synod upon the bishop –which is in consensus with the Orthodox teaching -, but then he reaches to affirm the necessity of a “*universal primacy*” ¹⁵⁷, with the role of a guardian of the Christian truth, which:

*“(…) to guard and to express the unity of the Churches in faith and life, to guard and to express their communion of thinking, to not allow the local Churches to isolate themselves in the “provincialism of the local traditions”, to not allow them to weaken the universal (Catholic) connections, and to separate themselves from the unity of the life…”*¹⁵⁸

Father Stăniloae affirms that the primacy:

*“(…) it is not only a presidency conceived in democratic and parliamentary terms.”*¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁵ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica universală și sobornicească” („Universal and Synodial Church), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 2 / 1966, p. 176.

¹⁵⁶ In the continuation of the quoted writing we meet an editing mistake, as so many others encountered while studying the work of the illustrious theologian Dumitru Stăniloae. We consider that his writings **would have deserved a greater attention and a greater respect** (!!!) from the part of the ones who edited his works and who did the proofing of the text before printing, because sometimes small taping mistakes totally change, not only the literary sense, but, especially, the theological meaning, so that are attributed to Father Stăniloae mistakes which, obviously, do not belong to him. In the following fragment we have an anacoluthon, generated by the fact that the editing personnel forgot the negation: “For this plenitude of the Church, not only that (**DOES NOT**, o.n.) oppose(s) to the connection which unites it with the other Churches and to a dependency towards them, but a contrary, it postulates this connection and dependency, as an indispensable condition of its embodiment”.

¹⁵⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica universală și sobornicească” („Universal and Synodial Church), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 2 / 1966, p. 178.

¹⁵⁸ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica universală și sobornicească” („Universal and Synodial Church), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 2 / 1966, p. 178.

¹⁵⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica universală și sobornicească” („Universal and Synodial Church), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 2 / 1966, p. 178. We must highlight here that the quoted article is published in the year 1966, during the dreadful domination inflicted to the Romanian people by the Bolshevik plague, when terms as *democracy* and *parliament* would have been sufficient for the author to be thrown in jail, and even

In continuation, Father Stăniloae shows that some ecclesiological theories suit the Catholic theologians, for in essence, it is affirmed the primacy of the Pope and of Rome:

*“(...) the Eucharistic ecclesiology (...) though affirms a great autonomy of the local Church, it is not opposed to the universal ecclesiology, and it is accessible to a primacy of the Pope.”*¹⁶⁰

Other Occidental theologians, through the method of the small steps, try to build at the beginning an “attenuated, for now, unionism”¹⁶¹, and then gradually, to “take over” the “naïve” local Orthodox Churches, which are blinded by wrong theories and liar promises (even if animated by the generous ideals of the ecumenism).

Father Stăniloae quotes from Professor N. Trembelas, who condemns the Afanassieff’s theory and other theories alike, considering these theories so damaging than:

*“If these theories would have mastered within the Church of Christ, it is problematic if the Church would have preserved until today its evangelical Christendom, preached by Christ and by apostles, and then taught to the Church, and if the Church wouldn’t have become a syncretistic center, in which would have been firstly mixed the Judaic dough, and then the diverse elements of the paganism through Gnosticism and through other vain wanderings, altering the thesaurus of the godlike Revelation.”*¹⁶²

Referring to the universal character of the Church, to the principles which must be respected when one advances on the

killed. This formulation probably escaped censorship, “bored” of reading the religious texts...

¹⁶⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica universală și sobornicească” („Universal and Synodial Church), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 2 / 1966, p. 179.

¹⁶¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica universală și sobornicească” („Universal and Synodial Church), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 2 / 1966, p. 181.

¹⁶² Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica universală și sobornicească” („Universal and Synodial Church), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 2 / 1966, p. 183.

way, otherwise blessed, of the ecumenism, Father Stăniloae concludes:

1. The Ghost is wholly present within local Churches, but only as long as these Churches remain limbs¹⁶³ of the Body of Christ.

2. The Church is Universal, for all believers recapitulate themselves in Christ, and because the same Ghost works within all the members of the Church. The Universality of the Church it is manifested by receiving the same Mysteries, by the fact that the priests and the bishops officiate the Holy Liturgy, by the theoretical confession, and by putting in practice the same truth of faith.

The universality of the Church is given by the universality of Christ and of the Holy Ghost, and not by the geographical dimension, or by the temporal duration, which are worldly reasons. That's why we consider that one must come to ecumenism and union by starting from Christ, and not from people. Within true ecumenism, Christ is Primate, and local Churches are united into Him, in humbleness, in communion, and in fraternal love. What people add to these things couldn't be but wrong.

Father Stăniloae establishes a two-ways connection between the Holy Mysteries and the confession of the right faith, right faith which potentiates each Mystery, but whose absence empties the content of the Mysteries, making them simple formal acts:

“(...) confessing the right faith comprises in itself also the receiving of the Mysteries. And this confession is the criterion and the basis of the true Mysteries. That's why, according to the criterion of the faith, are judged the validity of the Mysteries and the unity of the Christian communities in the same Ghost, in the same Church. If a community different to mine, confesses the same faith, within which is comprised the same understanding of the officiated Mysteries, my community has in this fact the assurance that the respective community imparts itself with Christ, that

¹⁶³ Referring to this fact, Father Stăniloae affirms a paradoxical thing: “The limb is equal to the whole, but only in the frame of the whole. One can go even further: the limb is not less necessary to the whole than the whole is to the limb (...).”

it is animated by the same Ghost, the Ghost of the truth. (...) The Mysteries alone, separated from the wide light of the teaching of faith, they cannot be a sufficient criterion for the unity amongst communities (...)”¹⁶⁴

Father Stăniloae expresses, with the whole delicacy which usually characterizes his Orthodox theological affirmations, how it is done the “control”, the “guarding” of the undiminished truth of faith, not being there necessary a primate, a “human guardian”, who to keep the Church of Christ on the right track. The Church is “controlled” by the Holy Ghost and by Christ; one must never lose from sight the theandric constitution of the Church, the presence in it and the work of the Holy Ghost and of Christ in His Church. Thus:

“If the same Ghost keeps the Church in the unity of the apostolic faith, when within a community occur deviations from this faith, He doesn’t allow the other communities impassible to this deviations. If He can’t¹⁶⁵ bring the respective community back to the unity of the faith, He urges the other communities to an interruption of the communion with that community. (...) The Church cannot remain impassible towards an error, when this error occurs in other communities, because by doing so it would endanger itself in its entirety. The Church sets, by doing this, a temporary barrier in the way of its will to actualize itself in its universality (...) the Church wants to save the trunk from which to start circulating again, at the right time, the sap, which to fill up the respective communities with the full ecclesial essence.”¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica universală și sobornicească” („Universal and Synodial Church), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 2 / 1966, p. 192.

¹⁶⁵ We see here a contradiction regarding the almighty of God. It would have been, maybe, better to affirm that: “if the oikonomia of God allows, for a while, the respective community to deviate from the right faith...”

¹⁶⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica universală și sobornicească” („Universal and Synodial Church), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 2 / 1966, p. 193.

Father Stăniloae shows that, if one recognizes that through Eucharist, Christ and the Holy Ghost are wholly present within Church, then a human Primate of divine right it is annulled as possibility, for Christ and the Ghost are not “more”, or “fuller”¹⁶⁷ present within one Church than within other Churches. The existence of Christ, and of the Holy Ghost, it determines the ontology of the Church, and not vice versa.

Father Stăniloae admits, though, the necessity of a hierarchy of the clergy, which leads to some hierarchy within the Universal Church, but this hierarchy must not exceed the satisfying of some administrative needs. Thus:

*“This mysterious “grace” of the priority would contradict the theory of the sacramental or Eucharistic origin of the entire substance of the Church.”*¹⁶⁸.

¹⁶⁷ We believe that, related to the human errors in preaching the true Christ, even within the so-called „churches”, the Word of God Himself warned us: ROB: “And many liar prophets will arise and will deceive many. (Matthew 24: 11); “then, if somebody will tell you: Behold, Messiah is here, or beyond, you do not believe him. // For there will arise liar christs and liar prophets and they will give great signs and even wonders, to deceive, if possible, even the chose ones.” (Matthew 24: 23-24). KJB: “And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.” (Matthew 24: 11); “Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. // For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.” (Matthew 24: 23-24).

¹⁶⁸ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica universală și sobornicească” („Universal and Synodial Church), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 2 / 1966, p. 194.

II. KEEPING REVELATION ALIVE, WITHIN CHURCH

II.1. Keeping the Revelation in Efficiency in the Frame of the Church¹⁶⁹

Having in sight the aspects highlighted within the previous chapter and sub-chapters, respectively the challenges brought to the Church, by some tendencies, including by ecumenism, there emerges the question: can the Revelation be kept alive, or as Father Stăniloae says: *efficient, in the frame of the Church?*

In what concerns the Revelation, Father Stăniloae tells us that there are two stages: the first stage is constituted by the Embodiment of Christ, His work within world, ended through His ascent to heavens – and this is the supra-natural Revelation, in which the Son of God Himself comes to live amongst people, to show Himself to them, and to explain Himself to them; the second stage, during which Christ God is not present in a seen manner, amongst people, fact that doesn't mean that Revelation is no longer active – on the contrary, Christ, through the Holy Ghost, extends Himself within all believers, extending thus the Kingdom of God within people's souls.

During the supra-natural Revelation, God descended Himself to the man to the greatest closeness possible, and He elevated the man to the greatest intimacy possible with Him. But even after His Ascent:

*"He wants to accomplish in His humanity the closeness to all people, as with some equal partners to Himself, by maintaining the personal identity of each one; by this He wasn't to bring each one to the level of maximal human realization. In other words, He wants to extend the plan of God realized in Him."*¹⁷⁰

Father Stăniloae shows that our Lord and God Jesus Christ, didn't need to be saved through the union with the

¹⁶⁹ Title taken from Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (*The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*), volume I, Publishing House of the Biblical and Missionary Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 1996.

¹⁷⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (*The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*), vol. I, p. 37.

Father, for He was God, but He assumed the human enhypostasized nature, being man and God, to open for the human beings the way of the salvation, through their union with God, in quality of sons – through adoption. But Father Stăniloae specifies that there is not, within Christ, about two persons, one human and one divine, but about a sole Person, who unites Himself with God:

“(...) because in this situation couldn’t have been any man, because that man wouldn’t be the human center that God is. (...) Christ is the divine Person, who Himself, being also a man, makes possible, through communion accessible with Him as man, the communion of everybody with God Himself, or with the absolute Person. He is the center and the foundation of the action of extending the salvation and the deification to all the ones who believe. In Him the plan of salvation was realized as in a foundation.”¹⁷¹

This foundation, through extension, it becomes His Church, within which the action of salvation continues as in a laboratory in which, in an individualized manner, according to each soul, there take place the experiments, there is being received the guidance, and there are given the Mysteries, which lead towards salvation.

The Revelation was communicated through the Word of God into the Holy Ghost, and through the Holy Ghost the Revelation remains efficient, to the end of time. But the Revelation remains efficient only within Church, and sustained by the Church, and sustaining the Church. Behold how concise, but in the same time how expressive, Father Stăniloae defines the Church within which the Revelation remains efficient:

“The Church is the dialogue of God with the believers through Christ into the Holy Ghost.”¹⁷²

And again:

¹⁷¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (*The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*), vol. I, p. 37.

¹⁷² Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (*The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*), vol. I, p. 38.

“The Church is the supra-natural Revelation, ended into Christ, in its efficiency¹⁷³ upon us during time, through the Holy Ghost, it is the supra-natural Revelation reached at its fulness into Christ, in the action of full extending and fruition within the ones who believe.”¹⁷⁴ ¹⁷⁵

To protect us against falling into error, Father Stăniloae reiterates the fact that the supra-natural Revelation ended with the Ascent of Christ with the body to heavens, and he explains the modality in which, though, this Revelation still remains within Church, **but without becoming a new Revelation**, without being something added to the already happened and ended Revelation:

“The believers, through the sensitiveness produced within them by the Holy Ghost within Church, they become aware about the power of Christ in which is fulfilled the whole Revelation and they become aware

¹⁷³ Father Stăniloae often uses the word efficiency with two meanings, respectively as *action* and as *efficacy*.

¹⁷⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology), vol. I, p. 38.

¹⁷⁵ We believe that, thought at human scale the Church of Christ seems to be an old one (existing for almost two millennia yet) –, it is, though, a very young Church. Let's not forget the words of the Psalmist: “For a thousand years before Your eyes are as yesterday, which passed, and as the watch of the night”. That's why we think that if some people consider the Church of Christ as “aged”, or if some churches gradually let themselves to be conquered by human in the detriment of the divine, this happens due to human helplessness. A contrary, we must consider that the supra-natural Revelation took place as on “the day before yesterday”, that the Church of Christ is fresh and filled up with the presence of Christ and of the Holy Ghost, that the “end of time” still is very far from ending the savior process which takes place through the Church. Let's not forget what Christ says when He is asked about the end of the world: “And about that day and about that hour nobody knows, neither the angels from heavens, nor the Son, but only the Father (Mark 13: 32). It is necessary to us, to not be so blasé, so “tired” by the oldness of the Church of Christ; did not create the Holy Trinity the whole universe, and isn't the age of the Church insignificant as duration compared to the one of the universe? Didn't the Holy Trinity create the man, about whom the science tells us that the man exists from over 100,000 years, and God had to wait for us for so long, until, only 2000 years ago, we became enough “ripen” for receiving the supra-natural Revelation? Let's therefore strive to not make of the “oldness” of the Church a “stumble stone”! The Church is as fresh as it was at the beginning, and the Revelation is the same efficient as when Christ God lived amongst us. Only to be us receiving it!

*about the action of this power within them. But they do not discover a new Revelation or a plus of Revelation, in addition to the one fulfilled into Christ. The Revelation continues to be active, through the Holy Ghost, within world, into and through the Church, but it doesn't continue to renew itself with new parts. The Revelation is whole into Christ and from within Him it works, wholly, into and through the Church, upon the conscious beings, who believe and who receive the faith. **The light and the power of the Revelation have reached at the zenith in the sun Christ.**”¹⁷⁶*

In this sense Father Stăniloae affirms that:

“Church is Christ as full Revelation in the continuation of His efficiency.”¹⁷⁷

We meet at Father Stăniloae the splendid kerugmatik affirmation that the Church won't end its existence at the end of time, but it will continue to exist also in the future life, as Kingdom of God:

“From Him (from Christ, o. n.), the Revelation continues to lighten and to warm up, through the Holy Ghost, integrally, and not only to the end of time, but also in eternity, into and through the Church, from earth and from heavens (...).”¹⁷⁸

The Holy Ghost maintains the Church efficient in its quality of laboratory of salvation, for all the ones who believe in Christ.

¹⁷⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology), vol. I, p. 38.

¹⁷⁷ One, reading the works of Father Stăniloae, come very often across this kind of tropes, respectively aphaeresis or prolepsis, as a characteristic element of his rhetorical style, respectively, at the beginning of the chapters, of the sub-chapters, and sometimes of the paragraphs, he utters, concisely, the general content of what he wants to transmit, and then he develops the saying with well chosen arguments.

¹⁷⁸ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology), vol. I, p. 38.

We must consider the Holy Scripture and the Holy Tradition not as being aged, due to the time passing, but as being always alive, always “fresh”, always “overflowing”¹⁷⁹ the multitude and the richness of the life, and of the presence of the Holy Ghost and of Christ within them (within Holy Scripture and the Holy Tradition), and through them within Church. Father Stăniloae shows that the way the Church maintains the Revelation efficient, or, in other words, the way the Church remains savior, it is that of actualizing, constantly, by uttering and working them, the Holy Scripture and the Holy Tradition:

“Therefore the Church, through the Holy Scripture and through the Holy Tradition, it maintains in its true meaning, the Revelation in action. Its action is not but the putting in working of the Revelation preserved in its entirety, the preparation of the believers for its work, or for the work of Christ, explained in the Holy Scripture, and communicated through the Holy Tradition.”¹⁸⁰

Father Stăniloae rejects the idea according to which, if one considers the Church as having Christ and the Holy Ghost within itself, then the Church wouldn't need the Holy Scripture and the Holy Tradition. This fact would lead to the inefficiency of the Revelation because Christ could not be expressed in the absence of the Holy Scripture and of the Holy Tradition. And expressing, revealing Christ within Church, these action are fully authentic only in the Holy Scripture and in the Holy Tradition.

But where does take place the receiving of the efficient Revelation of Christ God, nowadays? Of course, within Church, where the Holy Ghost works, and where the Ghost makes Christ to be felt:

“The Ghost of Christ makes us sensitive for Christ and unites us with Christ within Church, for the fire

¹⁷⁹ John 3: 34: ROB: “For the one sent by God he speaks the words of God, for God doesn't give the Ghost by measure.”; KJB: „ For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.”

¹⁸⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. I, p. 38-39.

of the Ghost - which propagates from Christ - it cannot be separated from the human sensitiveness, common for Christ. He manifests as worker through the fire of the working faith. This fire is the life in continual consummation of the communion with Christ. The Ghost brings the life, for He realizes the communion with Christ.”¹⁸¹

Father Stăniloae in his diverse writings, as it is also the one analyzed here, affirms that we cannot receive the faith, but only through another person. Because of this, the faith has an interpersonal character. And the Church, as assembly of the believers, it is the efficient environment within which we can receive the faith, namely the truth of the Revelation. Behold here, one more argument for considering the Church as an efficient laboratory of the salvation of the ones who believe:

“Through the Holy Ghost the believers are not connected in isolation to Christ, but together. The one who reaches at the faith in Christ, he reaches there through the faith or through the sensitiveness of another human. The interpersonal sensitiveness of the faith within which the Holy Ghost manifests, it connects the ones who believe to the community of the faith within Church. The sensitiveness of the joy for the community with the absolute Person of Christ, it is extended in the joy of the communion and of the deeds of communion with others, in the participation of others to the absolute Person of God, Who has come at the level of the communion with them into Christ.”¹⁸²

His holiness affirms also the absolute character of the Church as laboratory of salvation. Salvation, as final target of the human person’s life, it cannot take place outside Church, for only the Church actualizes Christ, and makes the Revelation to be continually efficient, and this is because only

¹⁸¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. I, p. 39.

¹⁸² Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. I, p. 39.

the Church understands without mistake, without falling into error, the Holy Scripture and the Holy Tradition:

“(...) as alive and dynamic expression of the power of Christ (...)”¹⁸³

Church is:

“(...) the only one which places this power, or its warmth, in actuality, through the inter-human sensitiveness produced by the Holy Ghost.”¹⁸⁴

We would dare to add here: where to search for Christ, or where to find Christ, through the work of the Holy Ghost, if not where the Holy Ghost works and makes Christ present, namely within His Church?

The Revelation is kept efficient – therefore also the work of the Church as laboratory of salvation is maintained efficient – by maintaining alive the dialogue of the Church with Christ, dialogue that:

“(...) is held mainly through the Holy Scripture and through the Holy Tradition”¹⁸⁵.

Father Stăniloae considers the Holy Scripture as an appeal, still being addressed by God to the believers, each time when the Holy Scripture is read within Church. When one reads the words of the Holy Scripture, the words of the Savior are uttered: the Word of God is speaking to us in the most direct way.

Also, when we read the Holy Scripture, God transmits us the Revelation about Himself, in its plenitude. Father Stăniloae makes, related to this facts, a courageous and very expressive affirmation:

¹⁸³ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. I, p. 39.

¹⁸⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. I, p. 39.

¹⁸⁵ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. I, p. 39.

“The Holy Scripture is the Word of God Who interpreted Himself in words, in His work of coming close to the people, for elevating them to Him, to the end of time. Through its word, Christ continues also to speak to us, to provoke us to answer with the deed, to work, thus, also within us. We feel through the word of the Scripture that Christ continues to work within us through His Holy Ghost (...)"¹⁸⁶

The Holy Scripture describes the savior plan of God, which has been prepared, which is being unfolded, and which will continue to the end of time. The Holy Scripture contains the Revelation in its entirety, for God did not want to hide from us anything useful for our salvation, and thus, within Scriptures is described:

“(...) His integral kindness towards us, comprised in Christ”¹⁸⁷.

Father Stăniloae reiterates his doctrine about receiving faith through the mediation of another believer, though now, by using the adverbial locution “in general”, he nuances the absolute character of this way of receiving the faith. His holiness tells us that:

“(...) in general, the word of the Scripture has power when is communicated by a believer to another man, either by repeating it, as one can find it in the Scripture, or by explaining it. For in the faith between them there works the Holy Ghost (Who makes Christ¹⁸⁸ present and working to us, o. n.). The faith,

¹⁸⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology), vol. I, p. 40.

¹⁸⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology), vol. I, p. 40.

¹⁸⁸ Matthew 18: 20: ROB: “For where are two or three gathered together in My name, there I am also amidst them”; KJB: “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” Behold how the faith, and its consequence: salvation, they are guaranteed to take place within Church. We believe that, like Father Stăniloae uses the expression “generally”, likewise we mustn’t consider our human affirmations as absolute, for the Holy Ghost isn’t the “prisoner” of somebody or of something, and about Him, Lord Christ said us: “The wind blows wherever it wants and you hear his voice, but you do not

as work of the Ghost, it comes within somebody through another person, but only when that another one communicates the word of the Scripture and activates the power of the Scripture, in the communion amongst persons, in transmitting its word with faith, from a person to another, during generations.”¹⁸⁹

The first people who believed, they believed for their faith was transmitted them by Christ Himself, and the people who followed next, they believed for their faith was transmitted them by the people who saw Christ. **In a symbolic manner, Father Stăniloae institutes, in receiving and transmitting the faith, a mystery somehow similar to ordination, but which is officiated not by laying the hands, but by laying the soul;** anyway, receiving the faith, in the vision of his holiness, it is inseparable from the Church. As, consequently, the salvation cannot take place but within the laboratory of the Church.

The Scripture is in the same time both cause of receiving the faith and generator of an increasingly stronger faith, by reading and by receiving its words within soul. The more frequently the believers read the Scripture, the more increases their capacity of receiving its content. With the increasing of the capacity of perceiving the truth of the Scripture’s words, we become increasingly convinced about their sacredness and about the fact that such words couldn’t come but from God. Through this increasing evolution of the faith, the soul reaches to feel the Living Christ and His Holy Ghost in a perceiving of a theandric manner: the supra-real Christ becomes “real” to the believers from a certain stage of the spiritual cleanliness.

Through the voice of the one who reads the Scripture’s words - into the Holy Ghost -, speaks Christ Himself. By

know where it comes from, neither where it goes to. Thus is with anybody is born from the Ghost.” (John 3: 8; in KJB we have: The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.”)

¹⁸⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology), vol. I, p. 41.

uttering the Scripture's words into the Holy Ghost, with faith, with joy, and with tremble¹⁹⁰, the faith:

*"(...) is given not only by its spiritual meanings, but also by the work of the Ghost of Christ, done through these meanings within the one who reads, or by Christ Himself, Who unveils the increasingly deep spiritual richness of His"*¹⁹¹.

We present here the quote from Saint Maximos the Confessor, used by Father Stăniloae to illustrate this process of penetration, and of gradual receiving of the love of Christ, from the words of the Holy Scripture:

*"One needs much (spiritual) science for, by removing firstly, carefully, the veils of the letter which cover the Word, to be us able to watch with the unveiled mind the Word Himself, standing by Himself and showing in Himself, clearly, the Father, as much as it is possible to the humans."*¹⁹²

Assuring the efficiency of the Revelation within Christ's Church, it takes also place by preserving unaltered the Holy Tradition, as it was received from the Holy Apostles, namely as it was instilled them by the Holy Ghost. Father Stăniloae considers the Tradition as:

*"(...) being itself a continual deepening of its content (the content of the Scripture, o. n.)"*¹⁹³

Father Stăniloae defines the evolutional impulse of explaining and understanding the Holy Scripture and the Holy Tradition through the notion of "dynamising principle" ¹⁹⁴, this

¹⁹⁰ Psalm 2: 11: ROB: "Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice of Him with tremble."; KJB: "Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling."

¹⁹¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. I, p. 42.

¹⁹² Priest Professor PhD Academician Dumitru Stăniloae, *The Romanian Philokalia*, volume II, *Gnostic Heads*, p. 194.

¹⁹³ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. I, p. 43.

¹⁹⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. I, p. 43.

principle being contained in the two mentioned sources of the faith. But the manifestation of this dynamising principle doesn't change the Apostolic explaining of the Holy Scripture and of the Revelation, leaving them, instead, unchanged¹⁹⁵. We believe that the Holy Tradition it is in fact the crystallized and validated by the Church result, of the continuous effort of perceiving and understanding, of transmitting the meanings of the Revelation and of the Holy Scripture, but also of working the commandments given us by Christ through the Holy Scripture, and whose fulfillment is instilled to us by the Holy Ghost.

For defining what the Holy Tradition brings as new, which isn't a simple explaining of the Revelation, Father Stăniloae paraphrases the Epistle towards Jews, of Saint Apostle Paul (7: 27, and 10: 10), who tells us what the Holy Tradition means:

"To understand, to use, namely to integrate into our destiny, the elements of a Revelation destined precisely to make for us, forever present, the grace the Scripture has spoken about, for the first time, and which already has a long history... Through the Revelation into Christ it happened something once and forever."

Behold how Father Stăniloae explains the need of existence of the Holy Tradition:

*"(...) if the Scripture wouldn't have the intention of passing Christ into the life of the people, and the norm of this life to be according to Him, it wouldn't need to be completed¹⁹⁶ through Tradition."*¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁵ In his work entitled *Jesus Christ or the Man's Restoration*, Father Professor PhD Academician Dumitru Stăniloae shows how, along times, the Revelation, as it is comprised in the Holy Scripture, it is explained within Church in a manner destined to make it possible to be perceived by the people of a certain historical period. But this explaining doesn't change, by no means, the revelator content of the Holy Scripture. It is about *adapting* the explaining to the level of understanding of the people of that time, and not about *adapting* the Revelation, Revelation that remains forever unchanged.

¹⁹⁶ We do not agree the expression „to be completed”, for it needs to be completed only a thing that is incomplete. And this cannot be said regarding the Holy Scripture, which contains the Word of God, and which is perfect. We consider the Tradition as being the totality of the manifestations of the faith within real life, manifestations validated by the

A term which would spare the consequences of using the expression “to be completed”, and which we propose here, for explaining the necessity of the Tradition, would be the one of “actualizing”, with the meaning of “explaining” in a given context¹⁹⁸.

Father Stăniloae considers that the founding of the Church is the first act of the Tradition; founding the Church is a first passing of the Holy Scripture into the life of the people. We must specify from the beginning, that modifying or interpreting, in a diminished manner, or wrongly, the words of the Holy Scripture, or taking from them only what justifies our shortcomings and helplessness, it is by no means, a “passing into life” of the Holy Scripture. The Scripture is not diminished by applying it in the daily life, through Tradition, for also the life, the world, they are the creation of God, and they are of God. The world is good for, being the creation of God, and He did not create something evil. He is not a source of evil, but the evil comes into world, as Saint Maximos the Confessor shows, without having an own nature, but, through the human’s falling, the evil superimposes over things, and tries to pervert the perceiving, by the man, of the rationalities of God from within things. In this vision, the passing of the Scripture into world, it does not mean, at all, a lowering of it, a diminishing of it, which to justify a diminished faith, adapted to the worldly spirit and to the human fallings of the times. That’s why we think, that by receiving the diverse explanations of the Scripture, and of some manifestations taking place on behalf of it, it must be very carefully researched by the Church, and to take place only in continuity with and in the not-changeability of the Apostolic Tradition. We think it would be unnecessary to analyze here the falling and the damages brought by the wrong introducing of some human judgments in the doctrines of the Catholic Church and of the Protestant one, or in the neo-Protestant denominations, as also of other offshoots of this vine, which cut themselves off from the continuity of Truth’s Vine. The Revelation, namely the Apostolic Teaching, the Holy

Church, through the work and with the instillation and with the leniency of the Holy Ghost.

¹⁹⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (*The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*), vol. I, p. 43.

¹⁹⁸ See also the footnote no. 195.

Scripture and the Holy Tradition – must not be “diluted” for justifying the human fallings!

Preserving the Tradition intact, says Father Stăniloae, takes place:

“(...) through the hierarchical-sacramental structure specified by Apostles, as means of passing the content of the Revelation of Christ Himself within people’s life.”¹⁹⁹

Father Stăniloae says that:

The Tradition, as continuously enriched explaining of the same Christ, it cannot be separated from His receiving as unchanged content of the Tradition, from cogitating the same grace of Him, or from receiving the Same Person of His, within Church, through the Holy Mysteries, and through the explaining word about Him.”²⁰⁰

But we must not lose from sight that explaining Christ it is done, though, by people who cannot have a full knowledge, but they only know through “symbols and riddles”. Therefore, the Tradition must incorporate the new doctrines, the new explanations, and the new theological formulas, with great care and taking heed, to not be lost the continuity with the Apostolic Teaching and with the Symbol of Faith.

There are two aspects or modes of manifestation of the Tradition: its content, and its conveying. Father Stăniloae defines the Tradition’s content as:

“(...) the totality of the modalities of passing Christ into the human life, under the form of the Church and of all His works of sanctification and preaching.”²⁰¹

¹⁹⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. I, p. 45.

²⁰⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. I, p. 45.

²⁰¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. I, p. 45.

In what regards conveying the Tradition from a generation to another, in apostolic lineage, Father Stăniloae takes in consideration the “modalities”²⁰² through which this conveying takes place.

Referring to the aspects mentioned above, Father Stăniloae quotes two very illustrative affirmations of the theologian George Florovsky (*Orthodoxy*, Geneva, p. 40), which succinctly define the Tradition: “(...) Apostles taught and the Church received through their successors, the bishops, not only a teaching, but also the grace of the Holy Ghost”²⁰³; “In essence, the Tradition is the lack of interruption of the godlike life, the permanent presence of the Holy Ghost”²⁰⁴.

Synthesizing the two modalities of defining the Tradition, the one of Father Stăniloae, and the one of George Florovsky, we think that the Tradition can be considered as the passing of Christ and of the Holy Ghost into Church, and Their permanent actualizing within Church.

Father Stăniloae shows that the Tradition, though, it is dynamic and not static, because the state of closeness of God to the people it is, at its turn, dynamic and not static. The Tradition, through the fact that it explains the constantly actualized truth of faith, to an evolving mankind, it makes:

“(...) the content of the Scripture permanently alive, actual, efficient, and dynamic, in the whole its integrity, along generations, during history.”

Father Stăniloae affirms also that “*in this sense, it (the Tradition) completes the Scripture*”²⁰⁵, affirmation makes us feel uncomfortable, for God being present within the Holy Scripture through His Word, He doesn’t need to be “completed”. We consider more appropriate to nuance this affirmation like this: *the Tradition comes to make more accessible to the people, the receiving of the Revelation comprised into Scripture.*

²⁰² Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. I, p. 45.

²⁰³ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. I, p. 45.

²⁰⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. I, p. 45.

²⁰⁵ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. I, p. 45.

Churchly songs are part of the Tradition, being composed by Church's members, but all of them contain, or have as inspiration, texts from the Scripture, for they do not get far from truth, neither they contradict the Word. Father Stăniloae quotes V. Vedernicov ("The Problem of the Tradition in the Orthodox Theology", in *Journal of Moscow Patriarchy*, 1961, no.10, p. 40) who affirms that the hymns and the liturgical acts give to the Scripture: "(...) a deep dogmatic and spiritual interpretation. The Scripture, without the liturgical explaining, and without its applying in Liturgy and in the other Mysteries, it withers, it becomes disfigured"²⁰⁶.

Again, we are quite reserved when reading the affirmation of the mentioned theologian, and we rhetorically ask: does God "wither and becomes disfigured" without man? Maybe the human helplessness causes that, in the perception of the ordinary believer, who doesn't participate to the Holy Liturgy, the words of the Holy Scripture to become blurred, to receive inappropriate meanings. But this doesn't mean the Word can suffer any diminution because of our incapacity of receiving Him. Liturgy, as holy service, it is necessary to the man, and not to God. Tradition is for man, and not for God. Affirming that God needs the Tradition, it means to diminish His divine attributes.

Tradition is submitted to a permanent dynamism, it is continuously enriched. It starts from the Apostolic Tradition (Teaching) and it continuously accumulates new modalities which to facilitate the receiving of the Revelation to the man. But we must not think in an absolute manner, the role of the Tradition in receiving the Word, because this would again mean to impose rules and limitations to God. God gives Himself whomever He wants! And again, we must not consider that Tradition somehow circumscribes, of contains, the uncircumscribed and the not-contained One. And let's not forget that, affirming that without the Holy Tradition the salvation is not possible, we contradict the One Who says: "(...) To God, though, everything is possible"²⁰⁷.

Tradition has two main works, from which come all its elements: "the calling, and the descending, of the Holy

²⁰⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology), vol. I, p. 46.

²⁰⁷ Matthew 19: 26. In KJB we have: "(...) but with God all things are possible."

Ghost”²⁰⁸. The other elements of the Tradition which make the believers able to receive the Ghost – shows Father Stăniloae – are:

*“(...) the moral and spiritual life, with the restraints, the virtues, and with the repentance, belonging to it, established through the canonical discipline of the Church.”*²⁰⁹

Here we would want to show that works mentioned above, they come as willing self-sacrifice of the believer, as proof of his faith and of the love he has for our Lord Jesus Christ, and not as a way of forcing the grace to come upon believers who strive themselves like this. The grace is received as a gift, and not as payment.

Father Stăniloae shows that the Tradition is founded on:

*“(...) the savior acts of Christ, on the power the humanity has reached at into Christ, as also on the example of the help given by God, in so many cases, during the Revelation, on the trust that the love of God will become permanent, into Christ, for people, manifested in those acts and in the confidence that Christ has remained, in His resurrected state, close to us.”*²¹⁰

Of course that, explaining the mode in which the Holy Tradition still remains always unchanged, and is though in a continuous dynamism, it leads to paradoxical affirmations, which do not concern so much the divine content of the Tradition, referring to which would be understandable to be uttered, due to the limitations of the cataphatic theology, but which concern rather the aspects of the human life. Such an affirmation quoted by Father Stăniloae, it belongs to Vincent of

²⁰⁸ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. I, p. 46.

²⁰⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. I, p. 46.

²¹⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. I, p. 46

Levin, who says that: “Developing the Tradition it doesn’t mean changing it, but amplifying it in itself.”²¹¹

Of course the Holy Tradition is vital for believers’ salvation, for it is an essential help in receiving the Revelation. But we must take heed when we approach all the aspects related to Tradition, to not fall in Pharisaism, namely to commit the mistake about the Savior tells us: “(...) you have abolished the word of God for your tradition.”²¹²

Consequently, let’s not boast ourselves that we understand the things of God, because even to the Apostles, who saw Him face to face, and who received the Holy Ghost from Christ, the Son of God, it was almost impossible to “see” Him, and they even tried to oppose themselves to the eternal plan of God, as Apostle Peter did, when trying to determine Savior Christ to avoid His Sacrifice, whom Christ answered: “Behind Me, satan! You are offence to Me; because you think not the things of God, but the ones of the men.”²¹³

Father Stăniloae affirms that:

“Tradition cannot exist without Church.”²¹⁴

Verily, whose will the Tradition be, if not of the believers who participate to it, and who constitute the fighting Church of Christ? The believers participate to the Tradition in the community and in the communion of the Church:

“The preaching and the work of the Apostles are part of the Revelation too; the Revelation continued to be completed²¹⁵ within Church, after its founding”²¹⁶.

²¹¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. I, p. 47.

²¹² Matthew 15: 6. In KJB we have: “Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.

²¹³ Matthew 16: 23. In KJB we have: “But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.”

²¹⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. I, p. 47.

²¹⁵ See the footnote 196. Mark 13: 23: ROB: “But you take heed. Behold, I have told you everything.”; KJB: “But take ye heed: behold, I have foretold you all things.”

²¹⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. I, p. 48.

Referring to the affirmations from above, it might be more appropriate to be said that the Apostles were part of the plan of the Revelation and they contributed to transmitting the truth towards other people who weren't around the Savior, or in direct contact with Him. If we understand the Revelation as self-unveiling of God (Epiphany is part of the Revelation) then it cannot be done by people, but only conveyed, in the measure accessible to the human being. If we affirm that the work of the Apostles was part of the Revelation, then we lower the Revelation to human measures, even if these men are Saints.

And again: the Revelation, through the continuity of the Church and of the Tradition, starts being received the more fully; but not completed, for who can complete God and His works?

Father Stăniloae establishes a direct connection between the dogmas of the Church, as truths of faith, and the savior work of the Church, as laboratory of salvation, within which takes place the guiding of the believers on the narrow path of the salvation. Father Stăniloae defines dogmas as:

*"The Christian dogmas are, according to their shape, the points of the plan of our salvation and deification, comprised and realized in the godlike supra-natural Revelation, which culminated into Christ, and it is preserved, preached, applied, and explained or defined, by the Church. Therefore, they represent truth of faith necessary for salvation."*²¹⁷

Verily, we won't be saved if we have a wrong faith. Salvation cannot take place for the ones who are wandering outside the dogmas' truth of faith. Salvation takes place by coming to the true God, the One in Being, and threefold in Persons. By searching for this One, the believers can be saved. But if they do not know what they are searching for, what will they find? Or if they are searching for another god, how will they come to the Savior God? The salvation crosses through the "narrow gate" ²¹⁸; and towards this gate, the believers, the

²¹⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (*The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*), vol. I, p. 52.

²¹⁸ Matei 7, 13-14: ROB: „Enter the narrow gate, for wide is the way that leads to perdition and many are they who find it. // And narrow is the gate and narrow is the way which

Church in general, are guided by the truth of the dogmas. Any step aside, leads to roving and to failing the destination of the salvation.

Father Stăniloae discerns between “natural dogmas” and “supra-natural dogmas”. The first ones are part of the natural revelation (the natural gnosis²¹⁹) and they consist of determining the existential truths of the world. The next ones, the supra-natural dogmas, gathered together, they compose the supra-Revelation and they specify:

“(...) the ultimate meanings of the existence, (...) and they show concretely the possibility of their real fulfillment into Christ and our advancing towards their impropriation through the help of God, descended to us into Christ and into the Holy Ghost.”²²⁰

Father Stăniloae considers that, since the supra-natural dogmas have been transmitted by the Son of God Himself, by our Lord Jesus Christ, through Word and through His personal works, these dogmas have a greater power of conviction, and a greater “evidence” – they are more obvious to the people. But one needs faith for receiving them and for appropriating²²¹ them. The stronger the faith is, of the ones receive them, the more obvious the dogmas are. And he adds:

“Both dogmas and faith are effects of the work of the Holy Ghost.”²²²

lead to life and few are they who find it.”; Luke 13: 24: “Force yourselves to enter the narrow gate, for many, I am telling you, will try to enter and they could not.”; KJB: “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: // Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”

²¹⁹ After the straying of the so-called *gnostics*, the Church avoids using this word: Gnosis. We consider that the Church must faithfully fight for not letting to be confiscated such important words. The ones who used the word wrongly, they compromised themselves, but the word in itself must not be considered as being compromised. Otherwise, the heretics and the ones straying away, they could take any word and compromise it. Let's remember that, to the Holy Fathers, Gnosis meant: “*knowing / knowledge of God*”.

²²⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. I, p. 52.

²²¹ Împropriere (însușire) ca acțiune de a însuși.

²²² Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. I, p. 52.

Behold how the revealing of the supra-natural dogmas takes place, as work of God:

“In the case of the supra-natural dogmas, their evidence (...) is imposed (...) by an act or by a string of acts of self-unveiling of God, or of putting Himself in evidence. God reveals Himself or He reveals these dogmas, through an initiative of His, felt by the organs of the Revelation. And this makes the dogmas obvious. Their sense comes in sight from the content unveiled by this Revelation.”²²³

By comparatively analyzing the order of the stages through which are received the natural dogmas and the supra-natural dogmas, Father Stăniloae shows that in case of the natural dogmas one reaches from the meaning to truth, whilst in the case of the supra-natural dogmas this order is inverse: one starts from truth and reaches to meaning. In the natural Revelation, affirms Father Stăniloae, the man reaches at Logos through thinking, whilst in the supra-natural one, the man reaches at truth but not through his own effort of thinking:

“(...) in the supra-natural Revelation the faith is produced by the evidence or by the truth of the personal reality of God which is imposed to be man without his own effort.”²²⁴

Father Stăniloae nuances the affirmation regarding the “pressure” exercised by the supra-natural Truth upon the man, by showing that the revealing of God isn’t forcedly imposed to the people, but the “pressure” he mentioned about, it is an impulse, a calling, but which must be received, or accepted, by their addressee:

“(...) but here also, the truth of the reality which gives meaning to everything, does not reveal itself but only to the one who opens himself to it. Its pressure, no

²²³ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology), vol. I, p. 53.

²²⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology), vol. I, p. 53.

matter how strong, does not physically enter the organ²²⁵ of the Revelation, or in the one whom this organ communicates it. A person does not reveal himself, namely does not open himself, but to the One Who opens Himself to him. This is the nature of the Revelation as relation between persons. A person won't reveal himself to me, if I do not open myself to him. The less the divine Person does it.”

In other words, God won't exercise His savior acts upon us if we don't open our own soul to receive those acts; God does not force us to accept the savior truths comprised in the dogmas of the supra-natural Revelation if we won't want this. The salvation is an act of love, between the divine Person and the human person, whose initiative belongs to God, but this initiative must be accepted by the organ of the Revelation, namely by the man called to be saved within the Church's laboratory.

The “pressure” Father Stăniloae speaks about, it is a pressure of love, and of the evidence of this love, and not a forcing of the human person to receive the Revelation. The man, shows Father Stăniloae, can live also without living for somebody, but in such a case “he has no sense of the existence” ²²⁶. And “the sense is the foundation of the existence” ²²⁷.

But living without sense, it means living outside God, for God “gives sense to everything” ²²⁸.

Father Stăniloae shows that the existence of the divine Person “it is not simply ontic, but ontological” ²²⁹, namely it is not the one of a hypostasis that lives and develops for himself, but it is an existential one that determines the existence of everybody.

²²⁵ Here, Father Stăniloae uses a powerful metaphor: “organ of the Revelation”, for naming the man, by describing in the same time the purpose of the man related to the Revelation: namely, the man is destined to receive the godlike gift of the Revelation.

²²⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. I, p. 54.

²²⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. I, p. 54.

²²⁸ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. I, p. 54.

²²⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. I, p. 54.

We dare to not totally agree the following affirmation of the father:

“Faith is founded on Revelation, but Revelation does not take place outside faith. These are complementary.”²³⁰

Of course that, if the Revelation isn't the object of the faith, the faith cannot exist without Revelation. What we have to believe in, if not in the truth revealed us by God? But, even if we do not believe, the Revelation is there, it still exist. Of course, that Revelation and faith are complementary in the ascension of the man towards the love of God, for we believe on the basis of the Revelation, and the more we believe, the more the Revelation becomes more evident and it strengthens our faith. Thus we enter an ascendant spiritual spiral towards God, where the two forces which reciprocally potentiate their benefactions upon us, are: the Revelation and the faith.

We accept the dogmas, shows Father Stăniloae, on the basis of two great reasons: the supra-natural Revelation, and the work of the Church. Revealing Himself to us, at His own initiative as Person, God exercises upon us a pressure of love. And the Church must be seen as a community of the ones who believe, being in communion with each other and with all of them, and putting in practice, in the real life, the dogmas preserved and preached by the Church.

Foundation of the Church, as laboratory of salvation, it takes place through: the Embodiment, the Baptism of the Lord, the holy life of the Lord Jesus Christ amongst people, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, the Ascent of Christ Jesus to heavens with the body, and the Descent of the Holy Ghost upon disciples. But we dare here to affirm that the foundation of the Church, at the scale of the human person, as vessel of the filling up by the Holy Ghost, it takes place continuously, with each person who comes within Church, and who works within Church, upon himself and upon others, in order to be saved. The Foundation of the Church is continuously actualized at the Holy Liturgy, by actualizing the Sacrifice of the Lamb of God, then by celebrating the Mystery of the

²³⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology), vol. I, p. 54.

Impartation, when the believers receive, together with the Body and with the Blood of Christ, also the grace of the Holy Ghost. But these facts cannot take place without receiving the dogmas, with faith, “with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your thought”²³¹, as first commandment to love God, the One Who transmits, through Revelation, His dogmas, and Who transmits Himself within these dogmas.

The Church without dogmas is not a Church at all. For, what a church would transmit to its believers, as truth of its founding, of its existence, and of its work? How could such a “church” set his believers in dialogue with God, if won’t reveals Him through dogmas?

Father Stăniloae says that:

“(...) there is no salvation for the human person outside the communication with the divine Person. Outside this communication the human person doesn’t find the power for spiritually strengthening himself, and for eternally remaining as person, not-reduced to nature, or almost to nature.”²³²

If the man does not communicate with God, if he does not open to Him, for receiving Him, then speaking about salvation doesn’t make any sense. How could salvation exist outside God Who saves us? And how could we recognize God, Who saves us, without receiving the dogmas which reveal Him to us?

The savior plan of God for man, it comprises also His revealing to the man. This revealing takes place through dogmas which, being received by the man, the man receives the One these dogmas speak about. But, as Father Stăniloae shows, these dogmas, though formulated once and forever and unchangeable, they:

*...they are **NOT**: “(...) a narrowing of the spiritual free development of the human person who believes, but, on the opposite, the dogma maintains the human*

²³¹ Matthew 22, 37: “He answered him: To love your Lord God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your thought.”; In KJB we have: “Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.”

²³² Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, 1996, p. 56.

person capable of such a development. Christian dogmas are an assurance of the freedom of the believer as person, by not letting the human person submitted to the nature, and to dissolving into nature. Christian dogmas, on the contrary, they substantiate the spiritual development of the one who believes in freedom; for the dogmas are the expressions of the communion with God as person. And the interpersonal communion it is, by excellence, the domain of the freedom, though, in the same time it is the domain of the faith. That's why Saint Cyril of Alexandria says that the ones who become sons of God are "received at the liberty of the faith"²³³ which reigns in the courtyard of God".²³⁴

The freedom of faith offered to the believer by dogmas, it doesn't hinder upon their systematic and unitary character, for they speak about:

"(...) the alive unity of Christ, the Person in Whom is united and Who unites the Godhead with the creation. And Christ – the divine-human Person, He is the system, being as comprising as opened and promoter of freedom, in the ones who want to be saved through Him."²³⁵

That's why the letter of the Old Law, we believe, by promoting the constraint instead of freedom, it led to death and not to life, for the true life, the spiritual one – that one in which the man elevated himself above nature – it cannot exist outside liberty. And maybe that's why the Jews opposed themselves so vehemently to Jesus Christ, because between the darkness and the shadow of death they lived in, and the Light of the Life brought by the Son of Man and of God, it was an impassable precipice. Christ brought them freedom, but

²³³ Saint Cyril of Alexandria, *Explicarea Evangheliei Sfântului Ioan (Explaining the Gospel of Saint John)*, Book V, at chapter 8: 35; G. P. 73, 864.

²³⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. I, p. 56.

²³⁵ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. I, p. 56.

they expected Him, on the contrary, to bring them the chains of the worldly power.

Father Stăniloae shows that:

*“(...) the general idea uniting all Christian dogmas in a system (is, o. n.): promoting an increasingly intimate communion of ours, with the personal God, Who made Himself man on this purpose. This perfect communion of everybody into Christ, and therefore also amongst themselves, it is what one calls **the Kingdom of Heavens or of God, namely the consummate order of the full communion**. In other terms, the Christian dogmas express the plan of deification of all rational beings who want this, accomplished in its final consummate form, into Christ. And, in the developing of this plan, there isn’t but the specifying and the real fulfillment of our natural aspiration towards the union with God.”*²³⁶

The unitary system of the dogmas isn’t a hindrance in the way of the spiritual growth of the believer. The unity of the system of the Christian dogmas resides from Christ, and Christ offers, through the deification of the man, the perspective of an infinite development of the human person, in his continuous ascension towards God.

Into the embodied Jesus Christ, there is present the Trinity. Jesus comes to dwell amongst people, and in the same time with Him there come also the Father and the Holy Ghost. Father Stăniloae affirms that:

*“Christ shows through Himself, the Father and the Ghost, by committing together with Them the work of elevating the mankind to the eternal communion with the Holy Trinity; the Trinity being the structure itself of the perfect communion.”*²³⁷

Though the Christian dogmas establish the truth of faith in its various aspects, for they refer to the same savior plan,

²³⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (*The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*), vol. I, p. 56.

²³⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (*The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*), vol. I, p. 56.

plan worked from ever by the Holy Trinity, the ultimate content of the dogmas has a unitary character. Father Stăniloae says:

*“(...) Christian dogmas are many and though only one, for Christ is One, but in Him are given all the conditions and means of our deification. And the Person of Christ as Embodied Son of God, and that’s why also His work, He starts from Trinity towards bringing back the people in communion with the Trinity.”*²³⁸

The two natures, the human one, and the divine one, they are united in the Hypostasis of Christ, in a maximum union, but without being confounded. Christ, Father Stăniloae shows, **“He is a new species”**, by remaining in the same time, and in a full mode, God, and being in the same time, and in a full mode, man. From the two consummated communions, the one between the human nature, and the godlike nature of Christ, and the one between Christ, as Person of the Holy Trinity, with the Father and with the Ghost, the result is the possibility of the communion between man and the Holy Trinity. Father Stăniloae shows that:

*“In communion with Him (with Christ, o. n.), each man becomes son of the Father, according to the grace, enjoys the full love of the Father of Christ, and the Father can enjoy the perfect love of the man Christ, become His Son, love in which is united the love of all the ones who believe in Him.”*²³⁹

We believe in the Holy Trinity because Christ Jesus Himself reveals the existence of the Holy Trinity, through Himself, and through His sayings. Thus He becomes: **“the foundation of the faith into Holy Trinity”**²⁴⁰.

The perichoresis of the Trinitarian Persons constitutes the impulse which attracts us towards communion; the

²³⁸ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. I, p. 58.

²³⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. I, p. 59.

²⁴⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. I, p. 560.

consubstantiality of the Trinity stays for us as model on the road of the salvation, and calls us to receive the adoption through grace, and to participate, as much as it is possible to the human person, to the communion with God, communion that has at its basis the Embodiment of the Son of God.

The godlike Apostle Paul says: *“And if Christ did not resurrect, vain is then our preaching, vain is also your faith”*²⁴¹. Consequently, the dogma of the Resurrection is fundamental for the Christian faith, and for the process of salvation that takes place within the savior laboratory of the Church. The dogma of the Holy Trinity, and the dogma of the Resurrection of Christ, they are tightly connected. Actually, the Persons of the Holy Trinity are so tightly connected through a consummate communion, than, where One is working, all of Them are working. The divine work is always of the whole Holy trinity. In this sense, Father Stăniloae says that:

*“The Resurrection cannot be explained without the Holy Trinity. The whole oikonomia committed by the Holy Trinity is **found**²⁴² in Resurrection.”*

The Church makes the communion possible, as much as it is allowed to the man, with the Holy Trinity, and this communion brings the salvation, defined as incorruptibility, respectively, as participation to the life of the Holy Trinity:

*“The godlike incorruptible life is communicated through the Persons of the Holy Trinity, by receiving the ones who believe, in the community with Themselves. This life doesn’t subsist, in a real mode, outside Trinitarian Persons.”*²⁴³

The general resurrection, at the second coming of Jesus, it is not forcedly savior. The resurrection of the ones who lived within Church, in the communion with each other, and in the

²⁴¹ I Corinthians 15: 14. In KJB we have: “And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.”

²⁴² We have replaced here *it ends* with *is found*, for we reckon that oikonomia of the salvation is a plan and a continuous process, started from ever, and taking place right now, and continuing to the end of time.

²⁴³ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology), vol. I, p. 62,

communion with God, it is a resurrection of an even more accentuated communion with the Holy Trinity, communion that will be always fuller, at infinity. But the resurrection of the ones who lived outside communion of the Church, and outside communion with God, it will be a resurrection towards the eternal loneliness. They didn't want, as long they lived within world, the truth of the Church; therefore they won't be able, either after the general resurrection, of receiving the love of God, though they will eternally be longing after it.

The Embodiment of One from Trinity, of the Son of God, it takes place, for Jesus to:

“(...) recapitulate everybody in Himself, and for bringing, thus, everybody in the eternal communion with God, the One in Trinity.”²⁴⁴

Father Stăniloae shows also that Christ, by Embodying Himself, the by being the Holy Ghost resting upon Him and shining from Him, the communion bridge between believers it is built in this way, according to the model of the Holy Trinity:

“The Ghost creates the communion amongst us, for in Him is the un-merged communion of the Holy Trinity”²⁴⁵.

We meet at Father Stăniloae the following theological affirmation of a genius beauty:

“The Holy Ghost realizes the elevation of the creation at the state of Church.”²⁴⁶

The Church is everywhere, where God is. And God is present within entire creation. The creation is given to the man, for the man being deified, at his turn, to deify the creation, to gather the creation again, spiritualized, to its Creator, to God.

²⁴⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. I, p. 64.

²⁴⁵ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. I, p. 65.

²⁴⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. I, p. 65.

II. 2. Dynamic of the Creation within Church²⁴⁷

The Church doesn't exist outside world, or outside creation. The Church has been founded to work in the frame of the creation, to deify the creation, and to turn the creation back to God, its Creator. The salvation, taking place within Church, and the Church being in connection with the creation, the people's salvation is not isolated from creation.

The Christian believers do not live in isolation and that's why, their action, their good works, they influence the world in generally, and the fellow humans especially, the believers and the non-believers, the ones from within Church and the ones from outside Church.

The Church preaches to the believers the truth of faith, and the mode in which the believers must apply this truth in practice, and the attitude they have to approach with, their work within Church and world. Thus, Father Stăniloae says that:

“Church's people tending towards their eternal fulness into God, they know that they won't obtain this fulness by waiting with a passive hope the end of their earthly life. They know that for obtaining this fulness at the end of the earthly life, they must move themselves towards their spiritual consummation, and this implies the betterment of their relation with the other peoples, no matter they belong or not to the Church. And this contributes to the amelioration of the relation of all people in general.”²⁴⁸

Father Stăniloae indentifies the material, social, and cultural fluxes, which bring the Christian in connection to each other, and with the other people, making them interact and influence each other towards good or towards bad. These fluxes are described by his holiness in simple, and just because of that, very expressive words:

²⁴⁷ Title taken from Dumitru Stăniloae, „Dinamica creației în Biserică” (“Dynamic of the Creation within Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 3-4, 1977.

²⁴⁸ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Dinamica creației în Biserică” (“Dynamic of the Creation within Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 3-4, 1977, p. 281.

*“Christians eat the same bread as the other people do, and therefore they work together for preparing this bread; they use the same words and the same expressions, and through them, they express and awake the same fund of human sentiments and aspiration towards better.”*²⁴⁹

The Christians, though, they consider the creation and its dynamic, with the apparatus of thinking specific to their faith. The creation is the gift of God for the people, and Christians give thanks to God for this gift. And:

*“(...) they (the Christians, o. n.) know that their aspirations towards better, are aspirations towards God, sustained by God.”*²⁵⁰

Father Stăniloae shows that, though the Christians see the world through the prism of their faith in the truth of the Revelation, they still not isolate themselves from other people, but they do the opposite.

We consider that, even if the Christians do not isolate themselves from the world, the non-Christians or the non-believers do not share the same enthusiasm of the communion with Christians, and they even fight by all available means against God. But despite this, the Christian communion in general, and with the non-believers in special, it must be as the Savior commanded us: *“And I say to you: Love your enemies, bless the ones who curse you, do good to the ones who hate you, and pray for the ones who harm you and who persecute you (...).”*²⁵¹, but without renouncing at anything from the doctrine of the Church, or from the confession of the right faith. This is because, even the evil one can show a poisoned love, when we renounce at the love of God, by sticking ourselves to the passions and sins, and then he accuses us at the time of our judgment for our sinfulness.

²⁴⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Dinamica creației în Biserică” (“Dynamic of the Creation within Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, p. 281.

²⁵⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Dinamica creației în Biserică” (“Dynamic of the Creation within Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, p. 281.

²⁵¹ Matthew 5: 44. In KJB we have: “But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.”

The recent terrorist attacks, the arising of the political correctness and the neo-Marxism at the rank of world doctrine, the denial of the Christian values and of the family, the fight for social acceptance of homosexuality, of lesbianism, of the full sexual disorder, etc., all of these are ways through which the evil one fights to kidnap as much souls as possible from the flock of the Good Shepherd, and for driving them on paths which do not lead to salvation, but, on the opposite, these paths lead directly to hell. Father Stăniloae, when speaking about communion amongst people, he describes the ideal of the inter-human relations, like they must emerge from the Christian doctrine and thinking. But we must expect also sufferings from others, as a way God tries on our love, if it is true or fake.

Creation is “impregnated” by movement; it is in dynamic, because it receives the uncreated energies of God, energies which maintain the creation in transformation and in spiritualization. Saint Maximos the Confessor considered that:

“(...) the movement has its origin in the creator act of God, and it is the inevitable way through which the creature reaches at consummation and rests in the plenitude of God. Not by exiting the movement, one reaches at God, but through movement. The Movement has a creational character, and therefore a divine origin and finality.”²⁵²

The things and the creatures, by having within them divine rationalities, they are attracted towards the unity with the Logos, with the Supreme Rationality:

“They advance towards this unity as towards the center of a circle, center that was also their point of departure.”²⁵³

Christian person’s advancement towards the communion with the Logos, it transforms them spiritually, and

²⁵² Dumitru Stăniloae, „Dinamica creației în Biserică” (“Dynamic of the Creation within Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 3-4, 1977, p. 282.

²⁵³ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Dinamica creației în Biserică” (“Dynamic of the Creation within Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 3-4, 1977, p. 282.

the spiritual development makes them the more capable of communion with other people. Father Stăniloae shows that:

*“By advancing from stair to stair, the Christian human persons will become transparent to others, and the things will become transparent to the persons. This is for in the center where they reach at there is the infinity which feeds endlessly their totality, in a consummate harmony. It is a fact that can already be lived in this life by the ones who make obvious their deeper and more authentic humanity.”*²⁵⁴

We have in the paragraph from above a new definition of the salvation, shared us by Father Stăniloae. So, are saved, in the laboratory of the Christian faith and of the Church, the ones who reach, through spiritual development, and by working the virtues, at **discovering their profound humanity**, placed there by God, namely **at the rationality placed within them by God**.

An interesting idea expressed by Father Stăniloae, it approaches the problem of the good, like it can the good be understood and identified by humans. This is because the deeds done by Christians “desire the good”, but is it good what Christians want? And then, Christians’ deeds and works, which they want to be good, are they actually good? Namely, are they pleasant to God? How can we discern what the good is? Father Stăniloae utters some characteristics the Christians can guide themselves with, in their actions, which they desire to be savior. Thus:

“Each one wants the good through progress, even if the sin or the narrow conscience determines the chosen good to not be a true good. Only the good attracts; only the good sets each conscious being in motion. This is the cause due to which also the evil hides itself under the mask of the good, or searches for a justification through an apparent good. This shows us that there exists a supreme conscious form

²⁵⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Dinamica creației în Biserică” (“Dynamic of the Creation within Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 3-4, 1977, p. 282.

of the good that imprinted also to the created conscious beings the movement towards good, by attracting them towards itself. Due to this the world appears not only as being in motion, but also aiming through motion towards good. The good is through itself progressive, expansive, or sustains the expansion and the progress, or leads towards good the ones which are not yet in a full good. This is because the good is the plenitude of the Supreme Being, or the aspiration towards plenitude of the not-fully realized beings.”²⁵⁵

We can deduce from here another **definition of the salvation**, as being a **realization of the plenitude of the good within human being**; this realization of the good takes place through the dynamic (the motion) of the human being, by searching for the good and by working the good, through spiritualization, through the movement towards the union with the supreme good, with God, as much as it is given to the man.

Father Stăniloae quotes from Saint Gregory Palamas, who calls God as: “*The Shape in shapes, as principle of the shapes, or as source from where the created beings receive their power for doing their shapes*”²⁵⁶.

Again, we can deduce from here one more **definition of the salvation**, as **the movement of betterment of the creature’s shape, so that it becomes capable to “come back” to the Supreme shape he has been born by**.

Father Stăniloae concludes, referring to the patristic conception, the fact that there is continuity between the world from outside Church, and the one from inside Church, between which there is a continuity of motion, of dynamism. Between the two “worlds” there is solidarity of movement, of dynamism, towards the Creator. The world from outside Church still belongs to God. **The fighting Church, as institution, can’t delimitate what belongs to God, and what doesn’t**. But, the Church, this laboratory of salvation given us

²⁵⁵ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Dinamica creației în Biserică” (“Dynamic of the Creation within Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 3-4, 1977, p. 283.

²⁵⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Dinamica creației în Biserică” (“Dynamic of the Creation within Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 3-4, 1977, p. 283.

by God, it provides us the way on which, by working the good, we can reach at salvation.

Father Stăniloae quotes from Saint Maximos the Confessor, who calls the man as “*the «laboratory» (εργαστήριον²⁵⁷) that connects and keep together everything in an ensemble, and it is, in a natural manner, the intermediary between the extremities of all divisions...*”²⁵⁸ but these individual “laboratories” are united in the great laboratory of the Church, moving towards achieving the salvation. That’s why, once more, the Church can be called as **“laboratory of salvation”**. A very important nuance expressed by Father Stăniloae is that the salvation of the man doesn’t take place outside creation, but within dynamism of the creation. The man, as priest of God, he has the mission to sanctify the creation, and to bring it back, through spiritualization, and by making it transparent to the spirit, to its Creator. Therefore, the dynamism of the creation is seen by his holiness as:

“*(...) the effort of gradually unifying everybody in God, namely into the plenitude of everybody’s love and live.*”²⁵⁹

Father Stăniloae identifies as premise of the union of the people and with the Creator, the transformation of the human beings, their spiritualization. But this process of becoming transparent for the action of the Holy Ghost within them, through the contact between humans and creation, it transforms and spiritualizes the surrounding world, it makes it transparent, and it spiritualizes it.

He also shows that during history, as consequence of the dynamism placed by God within creation, the man has grown spiritually, and the dialogue between God and man has correspondently evolved. The man becomes increasingly capable of asking questions about God and of receiving the answers God offers him, in this dialogue of love:

²⁵⁷ Greek. In English: workshop.

²⁵⁸ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Dinamica creației în Biserică” (“Dynamic of the Creation within Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 3-4, 1977, p. 284.

²⁵⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Dinamica creației în Biserică” (“Dynamic of the Creation within Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 3-4, 1977, p. 284.

“This is because God shows His love, asking the faithful man to freely answer Him with his own love. The answers from God, given from the beginning of the world, and in a continuous succession, on the measure of the believer’s spiritual growth, are in the same time, calls from God towards the believer, for this one to answer, with his love, the gifts of His love. And the believer grows not only through his own questions, but also through his practical answers given to the love of God, deciphered in the answers of God, for the growth of the believer, and according to his level of each time. And the answers of the love of the believer are manifested in his own giving, offered to God and to the other people, in offering the things, and his own person. In this giving offered to God, and from man to man, it consists the growth of the believers; in this it consists their progress in uniting with each other, and with God.”²⁶⁰

Father Stăniloae identifies the things and the persons from the world as elements which lead us towards salvation. Their primordial role is to save us from slavery of the immanent, and to elevate us in the transcendent of the godhead:

“(…) world’s things and persons, they are bridges towards God and towards other humans, bridges which elevate us above ourselves. But, on the measure we discover deeper virtualities and meanings in them, or we transfigure them through the uncreated energies of God²⁶¹, they becomes to us more transparent bridges towards God, and towards

²⁶⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Dinamica creației în Biserică” (“Dynamic of the Creation within Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 3-4, 1977, p. 285.

²⁶¹ God works through His uncreated energies, within world, for saving us, and for saving the entire creation, but also us, as faithful servants, we must place ourselves in the flux of these energies, and to work, with their help, for our own salvation, and for the deification of the creation. In other words, we owe, for being saved, to spread around us, and upon the people, and over the world in general, the love that God plants it and keeps it efficient within us.

*our fellow humans. As such, all of them are mysteries in the wide meaning of the word.”*²⁶²

Father Stăniloae shows that Christ comes to restore the dynamism of the creation, as this dynamism must manifest “*on the basis of the real possibilities imprinted by God in it*”²⁶³. We would formulate like this: Christ comes to give back, to the man and to the creation, the purpose God created them on. Christ reestablishes the rationalities of God within man and creation.

“(…)*due to the sin, the descendants of Adam lost the conscience that they have the motion from God, towards the infinity of God*”²⁶⁴ (*epektasis; επεκταση = extending, extension*).

Father Stăniloae also says that:

“By assuming the human nature, He (Christ, o. n.) has made us known that the origin and the purpose of our motion is Himself. Into Christ, the Logos of God made Himself the object of the rationality (of thinking) and of the human motion, by placing it in total accord with His divine rationality, and with full of love divine motion, and making it moving towards Himself as God, and towards His Father, as it must have been moving in the virtue of the creation itself. He opened, to the understanding and to the moving, the creation, and the infinite perspective in Himself. (...) The man and all the things of the world have been elevated again into Christ, in the light of and in the function of gifts from God, towards people, and vice versa. This is because Christ is the supreme gift from God towards His creature, and vice versa, for he

²⁶² Dumitru Stăniloae, „Dinamica creației în Biserică” (“Dynamic of the Creation within Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 3-4, 1977, p. 284.

²⁶³ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Dinamica creației în Biserică” (“Dynamic of the Creation within Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 3-4, 1977, p. 286.

²⁶⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Dinamica creației în Biserică” (“Dynamic of the Creation within Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 3-4, 1977, p. 286.

is full of the whole love of God, towards people, and of the whole love of the man towards God.”²⁶⁵

In the frame of restoring the dynamism of the man and of the creation, in their epektasis movement, this dynamism: “(...) it receives a new intensity and it is reestablished on its authentic track through the dynamism propagated from inside Christ”²⁶⁶. Father Stăniloae shows that this reestablishing doesn’t come as a new element, but as a restoration of what already existed through the rationality of the man and of the creation. Christ doesn’t create us anew, for the creation is perfect from the beginning, but He rebirths us into the Ghost, to be perfect as we were at the beginning.

The restoration of the human dynamism of the movement towards God takes place through:

“(...) the extending of His full love (of Christ, o. n.), towards God, and towards His brothers into humanity. And this restores, more than any other thing, our nature in its authenticity.”²⁶⁷

By restoring the man and the creation, Christ founds His Church amidst a restored creation, with restored people, upon whom the Holy Ghost has descended.

Father Stăniloae gives an exhaustive but concise definition to spiritualization:

“Spiritualization means the overwhelming by the Holy Ghost, through our ghost, upon our body’s inferior impulses, and upon the rigid laws of its material nature, making it a docile tool of the spirit, and transparent to the kindness, freed within it of any tendency of the man to reserve himself for himself, and to oppose himself to the full actualization of him as person opened in communion, and opened to the light without evening of the divine

²⁶⁵ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Dinamica creației în Biserică” (“Dynamic of the Creation within Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 3-4, 1977, p. 286.

²⁶⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae „Dinamica creației în Biserică” (“Dynamic of the Creation within Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 3-4, 1977, p. 286.

²⁶⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Dinamica creației în Biserică” (“Dynamic of the Creation within Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 3-4, 1977, p. 287.

love, for transmitting it to others. Through this spiritualization, the human “laboratory” that transforms and unifies the world, it is being increasingly warmed by loving God and by loving his fellow humans, for uniting them, for articulating them, and for welding them together. The spiritualization is the most characteristic and the fullest dimension of the dynamism of our nature.”²⁶⁸

“The world from within Church”, it receives the powers and the features of the Church, powers and features transmitted through the work of the Holy Ghost, and of Christ, within and through Church. That’s why, the world from within Church, it benefits of the influence of attracting others towards God, through Christ, under the work of the Holy Ghost; the dynamism of this movement being one of epektasis nature. The world from outside the Church, it has also epektasis dynamism, for it has been also restored in its initial dynamism through the Embodiment, the Sacrifice, and the Ascent of Christ, but its dynamism is a less accentuated one, because it does not benefit of the integration as Body of the Logos.

The actualization of the dynamism within the Church of Christ, as savior element, actualization that takes place “in liberty and love”²⁶⁹, it brings an unequal advancing of the believers towards salvation. Father Stăniloae identifies four categories in which the believers which come in the laboratory of the Church searching for salvation, they can be classified.

A first category would be of the ones who, though they receive the Revelation in a superficial manner, they have no personal initiative for traveling the road towards salvation. The second category it is of the ones who, though they work the commandments of God in an initial phase, they do not engage themselves in the struggle for reforming the society towards good. The third category is that of the engaged socially believers, who fight for eliminating the oppression and the egotism. A last category, the fourth one, it would be that of the believers who:

²⁶⁸ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Dinamica creației în Biserică” (“Dynamic of the Creation within Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 3-4, 1977, p. 288.

²⁶⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Dinamica creației în Biserică” (“Dynamic of the Creation within Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 3-4, 1977, p. 289.

“(...) they are so advanced in the state of spiritualization, than they can be considered as saints. They have totally renounced to themselves, and they give themselves without any reserve, to the others. They have realized in themselves the state at which, if all people would reach, it would be accomplished the Kingdom of God. But they show through their total love, for everybody without exception, the culminant state our dynamism must tend towards, and irradiates from them the power for others to engage, and to persist on the way of this endless dynamism.”²⁷⁰

We have in the description from above **the signs according to which we can recognize the ones who have been saved.**

The dynamism of the Church influences the dynamism of the creation in general, for the believers extend the world from within Church, in the world from outside Church, and they live having also a social dimension.

Father Stăniloae shows about the believers who are on the road towards salvation, that they have united themselves with Christ, and they have become transparent to their fellow humans, so that through them, Christ appears to those ones, and through the love for their fellow humans, those ones are saved, and they are brought, attracted towards Christ.

II. 3. Holy Ghost in Revelation and into Church²⁷¹

Father Stăniloae defines the Revelation as being “not only the communication of a teaching about God”²⁷², but also the “manifestation of the presence and of the work of God, through word and power.”²⁷³

²⁷⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Dinamica creației în Biserică” (“Dynamic of the Creation within Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 3-4, 1977, p. 289.

²⁷¹ Title taken from: Dumitru Stăniloae, „Sfântul Duh în Revelație și în Biserică” („Holy Ghost in Revelation and into Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 2, 1974.

²⁷² Dumitru Stăniloae, „Sfântul Duh în Revelație și în Biserică” („Holy Ghost in Revelation and into Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, p. 216.

²⁷³ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Sfântul Duh în Revelație și în Biserică” („Holy Ghost in Revelation and into Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, p. 216.

In this sense he shows that, mostly of the time, the manifestation of the presence of God, His revealing, it takes place through word, a word that is always accompanied by power. But, his holiness shows also that:

*“Often, His presence is manifested also through a power outside word.”*²⁷⁴

The manifestation of this power it is not deprived of any connection with the word, even if this connection it means the announcing of the manifestation of a future power, or explaining the power that had just been manifested.

Father Stăniloae concludes that:

*“In all cases, through word, it is communicated, besides meaning, also a power from God.”*²⁷⁵

Thus, **the word is “creator and transformer through the power from within itself”**²⁷⁶ and this power, once the word uttered, it produces effects “in the creation’s order”²⁷⁷.

The power that accompanies the word, it makes possible to the soul, the capacity, the sensitiveness of noticing the presence of God, He being the One Who speaks to us.

Father Stăniloae shows that any act of God is a lighting act, an act that creates light:

*“(...) for God doesn’t work in darkness; He doesn’t work without lighting.”*²⁷⁸

The soul, when it perceives the godlike word, it knows about this fact, for it feels the supra-natural power irradiated by this godlike word. Between the capacity of the soul for

²⁷⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Sfântul Duh în Revelație și în Biserică” („Holy Ghost in Revelation and into Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, p. 216.

²⁷⁵ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Sfântul Duh în Revelație și în Biserică” („Holy Ghost in Revelation and into Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, p. 216.

²⁷⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Sfântul Duh în Revelație și în Biserică” („Holy Ghost in Revelation and into Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, p. 216.

²⁷⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Sfântul Duh în Revelație și în Biserică” („Holy Ghost in Revelation and into Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, p. 216.

²⁷⁸ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Sfântul Duh în Revelație și în Biserică” („Holy Ghost in Revelation and into Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, p. 216.

perceiving this power, and the power of God from within word, it takes place a process of influencing, so that, on the measure the soul is sensitized by the action of the godlike power from within word, the soul becomes increasingly conscious about the presence of the godlike power. But the influencing, the sensitizing of the soul, it takes place in the general frame of the human freedom, and that's why God doesn't force the soul to become sensitive to His power. In this sense, Father Stăniloae shows that:

*“When this possibility doesn't occur, because the power of God comes across a categorical opposition of the soul, the word remains only with an intellectual meaning, deprived of its quality of being transparent to the presence of God, and therefore being unrevealing. That's why it was possible an attitude of indifference towards the word of the Revelation, or a “critical”, “scientific” approach of the Scripture.”*²⁷⁹

The Revelation includes also the communication towards people of the fact that the power of God overwhelms also the physical-chemical processes from within nature, the behavior of which, the human mind has formulated, in the so-called natural laws, for God, creating the world, He has placed in it all its laws. Father Stăniloae shows that Orthodoxy hasn't lost the teaching according to which:

*“(...) the power of God (...) it is added to the power from within the natural processes (...), or it directs some of these processes, or overwhelms their power, in a sense that corresponds to the plan of God, for salvation, regarding the world (...)”*²⁸⁰

We would dare to consider the word “some”, referring to the natural processes, from the formulation from above, as unnecessary or restrictive, for God, the All-Keeper and the Source of the Providence, He sustains in subsistence and He

²⁷⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Sfântul Duh în Revelație și în Biserică” („Holy Ghost in Revelation and into Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, p. 217.

²⁸⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Sfântul Duh în Revelație și în Biserică” („Holy Ghost in Revelation and into Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, p. 217.

controls all the existing things, in an absolute manner. Nothing takes place, even the smallest process, without being allowed and sustained by God. The argument that some of these processes would be “evil” or “harmful” cannot stand, whilst, due to vain glory, we arrogate the fact of knowing the savior plan of God. This is because what seems to be harmful on short term, that it can be savior on middle and on long term.

Amongst the Persons of the Trinity, the One Who makes God known, and makes us able to receive Him, is the Holy Ghost. That godlike power that accompanies the word of the Revelation it is given by the presence and by the manifestation within this word of the Holy Ghost:

“The Holy Ghost is working with power in the revelator word, producing the sensitiveness of the soul which notices through this word not only an intellectual meaning, but also an active presence of God (...) Into the Holy Ghost it is being fulfilled the Revelation, it is known and it is experienced, the full of light and full of power presence from above nature, of God, by the souls sensitized on this purpose also by Him.”²⁸¹

Father Stăniloae shows that, though the Holy Ghost reveals God:

“The culminant Revelator became the Son, or the Word of God, through Embodiment.”²⁸²

His holiness tells us that any misbalance in considering the Revelation as done by the Holy Ghost and also by Christ the Word of God, it leads to straying and to excesses, and the ones who go on this road:

“(...) they fall in an individualistic subjectivism, making impossible the unity of the Church.”²⁸³

²⁸¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Sfântul Duh în Revelație și în Biserică” („Holy Ghost in Revelation and into Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, p. 217.

²⁸² Dumitru Stăniloae, „Sfântul Duh în Revelație și în Biserică” („Holy Ghost in Revelation and into Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, p. 218.

We add here that the Church deprived of unity, because it hasn't in its wholeness the capacity of receiving the Revelation in its entirety, it has a diminished efficiency in its function of being a laboratory of salvation.

Further, Father Stăniloae personifies the two categories²⁸⁴ analyzed before: respectively the word and the power, which, within Church, they become the Word of God and the Power of the Holy Ghost, and Who:

*“Only together They realize the Revelation of God”²⁸⁵;
“Without Word the power wouldn't be full, and without Power, the Word wouldn't impose Himself. Only together, the Word and the Holy Ghost, They effectuate the Revelation and the salvation.”²⁸⁶*

Quoting the teaching of the Church's Fathers, Father Stăniloae shows that the mind is the “window of the soul” through which the soul receives the Revelation, but this window, consequently to committing sins, it becomes opaque, and the effort of continuously searching for God, it comes to an end. Referring to this effort, which is required to be continuous, we believe that in nature, as law placed there by God, there is no stagnation. Through the effort of working the virtues, and of keeping the commandments, like a “spiritual sportsman” – the Holy Fathers use the term of “athlete of Christ” – we continuously elevate ourselves through Christ, with the help of the Holy Ghost, towards the Father. But, if out of vain glory, we consider that we have reached a certain level that allows us to cease our work of continuously bettering ourselves, since that moment, we will start losing the “training”, and we will come down, increasingly quickly, on the measure of accumulating the non-working, towards the thickness of the sin.

²⁸³ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Sfântul Duh în Revelație și în Biserică” („Holy Ghost in Revelation and into Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, p. 218.

²⁸⁴ We use here the term category in its meaning of „fundamental and of maximum generality notion, which expresses the essential and general properties and relations of the objects and of the phenomena of the reality”. (www.dex.ro)

²⁸⁵ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Sfântul Duh în Revelație și în Biserică” („Holy Ghost in Revelation and into Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 2, 1974, p. 218.

²⁸⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Sfântul Duh în Revelație și în Biserică” („Holy Ghost in Revelation and into Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, p. 218.

Father Stăniloae mentions two sources which make the Holy Ghost to influence the natural processes by overwhelming them with His power: the plan of God, and the prayers of the believers. Here we consider necessary to be added that Lord Christ shows us how to pray, by telling us the Lord's Prayer, about which He says: "You pray like this (...)" (Matthew 6: 9)²⁸⁷: and He warns us, in the same time, how to not pray, so that our prayer not to become abomination to God: "When you pray, do not say many things, as the Gentiles do, for they think that in their much speaking they will be listened to" (Matthew 6: 7)²⁸⁸. Referring to the prayer for obtaining material things, Christ teaches us: "For all these things are searched for by the pagans of the world; but your Father knows that you need these" (Luke 12: 30)²⁸⁹ and "Do not be resemble you to them, for your Father knows what you need even before you ask Him for that". (Matthew 6: 8)²⁹⁰. And, in the Honored Oratory of the Lord's Mother, we pray like this: "No one, of the ones who run towards You, comes out ashamed, You Most Pure Mother of God, You Virgin. But, by asking for the gift, he receives the giving, according to the **useful request**"²⁹¹. We won't receive anything we ask for, if what we ask for, even if it seems good to us, it would be useless or harmful to us. And again, even if we pray, we ask for the gift, and we receive the gift, for the Mercy and for the love of God; and let's not imagine, by any means, that we "force" God through our prayers to give us what we ask for. We receive the salvation as gift and not as "payment" for our endeavors. In this sense, the Holy Fathers of the Church show that the ones who aim to take payment are hirelings, and the ones who are sons they do not expect payment for their love for God.

Father Stăniloae tells us:

²⁸⁷ In KJB we have: "After this manner therefore pray ye:" (Matthew 6: 9).

²⁸⁸ In KJB we have: "But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking." (Matthew 6: 7).

²⁸⁹ In KJB we have: "For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things." (Luke 12: 30).

²⁹⁰ In KJB we have: "Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him." (Matthew 6: 8).

²⁹¹ *Book of Psalms*, Eight Edition, Printed under the guidance and taking care of His Beatitude Patriarch Teoctist, Publishing House of the Biblical and Missionary Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 1994, p. 357, paragraph no. 8.

*“The state of prayer is a state of knowing and feeling, a state of special sensitiveness for God, in front of which stands God, but it is itself produced by the Holy Ghost.”*²⁹²

In accordance with the dogma of the Holy Trinity, for amongst the Persons of the Most Holy Trinity there is no separation – but neither confounding! -, Father Stăniloae shows that where One works, All of Them work:

*“In a way, the whole Trinity is active in Revelation, and reveals Himself.”*²⁹³

In another place, his holiness shows again that, the Holy Ghost and the Word, They work together in Revelation:

*“The Word and the Holy Ghost are the two divine Persons Who effectuate the Revelation in a solidary manner. Both of Them reveal the Father, and They reveal Themselves to Each Other, as also in the internal godlike life. But the reciprocity, in Their revealing work, it doesn’t consist in replacing One for Another, but it is reduced only to the coming, of One or of Another, in the first revelator plan.”*²⁹⁴

By analyzing the Old Testament and the New Testament, through the key of the presence of the Word of God, or of the Power of the Holy Ghost, in the first plan of the revealing of God, Father Stăniloae shows that in the Old Testament the Word was adapted to a lower level of spiritualization, and the Holy Ghost worked through extraordinary acts of a special power. But neither in these conditions the Holy Ghost works separately from the Word, and Their efficiency in realizing the Revelation is complementary and reciprocally potentiated. In the New Testament the revealing work of the Word of God it

²⁹² Dumitru Stăniloae, „Sfântul Duh în Revelație și în Biserică” („Holy Ghost in Revelation and into Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, p. 219.

²⁹³ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Sfântul Duh în Revelație și în Biserică” („Holy Ghost in Revelation and into Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, p. 219.

²⁹⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Sfântul Duh în Revelație și în Biserică” („Holy Ghost in Revelation and into Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, p. 221.

appears to us as coming in the first revelator plan, the spirituality of the words increases, but never the Word works separated from the Holy Ghost:

“The Ghost made understood and efficient the words of God (...)”²⁹⁵

In his argumentation Father Stăniloae starts from the dogma of the Holy Trinity, according to which the Ghost proceeds from the Father and shines from the Son, and he shows that this proceeding and this shining have as finality the work of the Holy Ghost for the deification of the creation and of the man. We must highlight that this proceeding doesn't mean, by no means, a “diminution”, a “decreasing” at the Source, or a “consumption” of the Ghost. Like Christ through Embodiment, though He becomes the Son of the Man, He remains in the same time without diminution and without change in the bosom of the Father, in the communion of the Holy Trinity, likewise the Holy Ghost, by descending Himself into creation for sanctifying it, He never leaves the communion of the Holy Trinity, and He doesn't diminish His presence within this communion. Father Stăniloae says that:

“The Ghost is the One Who introduces, especially, the divine energies within creation, and makes them intimate and proper to the creature; He makes Himself a bridge over the separation between God and creation. He deifies the creation, and makes it eternal.”²⁹⁶

Referring to the divine energies, his holiness shows that:

“These energies come from the Father. They are received by the Son in His own mode, and by the Holy Ghost in His own mode, but together with the Son.”²⁹⁷

²⁹⁵ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Sfântul Duh în Revelație și în Biserică” („Holy Ghost in Revelation and into Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, p. 222.

²⁹⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Sfântul Duh în Revelație și în Biserică” („Holy Ghost in Revelation and into Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, p. 223.

²⁹⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Sfântul Duh în Revelație și în Biserică” („Holy Ghost in Revelation and into Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, p. 223.

The Ghost shines from the Son and in the front of the Father, transmitting to the Father also the shininess taken from the Son, as love and joy. But the shininess from the Son, of the Ghost, takes place also towards people:

“(...) it becomes also within us a power which lights the Son (...). Through this the Holy Ghost brings this shininess of Him, which starts from the Son and lightens the Son in our knowing self, strengthening this power of knowing the Son and, through this, the Father, and in the same time our joy and love for the Father, likewise the joy and the love of the Son for the Father.”²⁹⁸

Behold how, through the power and through the mediation of the Holy Ghost, and through the together-working of the Persons of the Holy Trinity, we receive the Revelation, and we become capable of being saved.

The Holy Ghost shines from us having associated the shininess of the Son, from Whom He shines, and thus we become capable to be adopted by the Father, for the Ghost brings to the Father the shininess of the Son from within us:

“And like the shininess of the Ghost from the Son has associated to itself the shininess of the Son, likewise His shininess from us has associated to itself also the shininess of the Son within us, strengthening through this our shininess as sons of the Heavenly Father, and our joy and love towards the Heavenly Father.”²⁹⁹

The Holy Ghost accompanies the Word of God, so that, when we hear the Word, we become sensitive; our heart is being warmed up by the love for God the Father, and for God the Son, because:

²⁹⁸ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Sfântul Duh în Revelație și în Biserică” („Holy Ghost in Revelation and into Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, p. 223.

²⁹⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Sfântul Duh în Revelație și în Biserică” („Holy Ghost in Revelation and into Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, p. 224.

“(...) The Ghost doesn’t bring within us a theoretical light (...)”³⁰⁰.

The godlike energy brought by the Holy Ghost in the hearts of the ones who believe, it becomes:

“(...) in these (hearts, o. n.) a power of knowledge and love of God.”³⁰¹

Though the Persons of the Holy Trinity work together, Their works mustn’t be confounded:

“The Holy Ghost keeps, in all respects, His place of the Third into Trinity: He doesn’t change it and He doesn’t confound it to the Second One, for the Trinity cannot be reduced to twoness, and for the Order within Trinity cannot be changed. This doesn’t mean that the Father isn’t perfect in Himself and in His work and He need the Son for that, or that the Son isn’t perfect in Himself and in His work, common with the one of the Father, and He needs the Holy Ghost to be so. But Each of Them is perfect, for He is united with the Other Two.”³⁰²

Father Staniloae also shows that:

“The work of Each One is perfect, but for it is common with the one of the Other Two. And the Third One means the width and the consummation of the communion not through Himself, but because He is with the Other Two. The Third One doesn’t have within Holy Trinity the meaning of a cardinal numeral, as also neither the Second One has this meaning³⁰³. (...) Neither the Second One comes “after”

³⁰⁰ Dumitru Staniloae, „Sfântul Duh în Revelație și în Biserică” („Holy Ghost in Revelation and into Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, p. 224.

³⁰¹ Dumitru Staniloae, „Sfântul Duh în Revelație și în Biserică” („Holy Ghost in Revelation and into Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, p. 224.

³⁰² Dumitru Staniloae, „Sfântul Duh în Revelație și în Biserică” („Holy Ghost in Revelation and into Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, p. 225.

³⁰³ Dumitru Staniloae, „Sfântul Duh în Revelație și în Biserică” („Holy Ghost in Revelation and into Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, p. 225.

the First One nor does the Third One come “after” the Second One. But all of Them are, in the same time, from ever, in equal power and honor. By counting, we indicate the specificity of each Person and we avoid the confusion. We indicate thus, the specific position of Each One, which cannot be changed with the one of Another.”³⁰⁴

Also in this sense his holiness says:

“At God the Three Ones aren’t separated. That’s why one cannot speak, in a proper sense, about the number three. In each One of Them, there are also the other Two Ones, having the same Being and work. In a way, they are in the same time One. But they aren’t also simply One, for each One has the same Being and uses the same work in an own manner.”³⁰⁵

Father Stăniloae, for expressing the apophatic of this unity in diversity, without confounding and without separation, he uses the rhetorical catachresis, through the adjunction of the numeral *three* and the noun *unity*:

“They are a Three-Unity.”³⁰⁶

Each revealing work is done by all Trinitarian Persons; no one from Trinity is absent when the other Two are working:

“Each work (energy) is done by all Three Ones; this is the common joy. But Each One does it from His position, in His personal quality. And, in the same time, in Each One there are working in common collaboration also the Other Two Ones.”³⁰⁷

³⁰⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Sfântul Duh în Revelație și în Biserică” („Holy Ghost in Revelation and into Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, p. 227.

³⁰⁵ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Sfântul Duh în Revelație și în Biserică” („Holy Ghost in Revelation and into Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, p. 227.

³⁰⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Sfântul Duh în Revelație și în Biserică” („Holy Ghost in Revelation and into Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, p. 227.

³⁰⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Sfântul Duh în Revelație și în Biserică” („Holy Ghost in Revelation and into Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, p. 227.

We notice from here, also the capital importance of the fact that the Holy Trinity is composed of Persons, because otherwise, one can fall in the danger of one unique and impersonal god. The perichoresis is such an accentuated communion than, in the absence of the character of person, one would reach at identity.

About the Holy Ghost as joy of the Father, Priest Stăniloae tells us that:

*“He is the joy of the Father oriented towards creation, having to strengthen within creation the creation’s joy about God.”*³⁰⁸

The Holy Ghost sensitizes the souls of the ones who receive Him in their intimacy, and makes them capable of receiving the Revelation. Father Stăniloae, by analyzing this sensitizing, he makes a parallel between the gnostic stages enunciated by Evagrius Pontius, and thus he considers that:

*“The first stair of this sensitizing, it is the faith. But on the measure that it increases, it implies in itself a more accentuated intuition of the transcendent reality of God. The one who has this sensitiveness, he sees God everywhere, through everything. (...) this sensitiveness it is in the same time a great affection, and a strong sentiment of responsibility towards God. This responsibility can take the shape (...) of a fear.”*³⁰⁹

The stairs of this sensitizing of the human soul for receiving the Revelation can be considered also as stairs of the salvation, which the man can cross over, on the measure of his worthiness, within the Church as laboratory of salvation. One can say that **we are saved on the measure we became more capable to receive, and on the measure we increasingly receive, the Revelation.**

The coming of the Holy Ghost in the souls of the human persons, it has extraordinary effects upon these souls, which

³⁰⁸ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Sfântul Duh în Revelație și în Biserică” („Holy Ghost in Revelation and into Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, p. 227.

³⁰⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Sfântul Duh în Revelație și în Biserică” („Holy Ghost in Revelation and into Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, p. 229.

become, at some people, permanent charisms. These persons are usually “*endowed with a special gift of praying*”³¹⁰. Thus, one can affirm the fact that the Holy Ghost produces within people the power of praying, and the people, by praying, from the whole their thought, from the whole their power, and from the whole their heart, they call even stronger, upon themselves, the Holy Ghost, and they become, increasingly more, in the image and in the resemblance of Christ. **Through the Holy Ghost, the human beings embody Christ, or: through the Holy Ghost, Christ embodies Himself in the saved people.**

Father Stăniloae defines holiness by using the same instrument of pneumatology, namely the paradigm of the locution “*to be transparent*”, through which it is expressed the reaching, by working the virtues and the commandments, at unraveling the callousness of the heart, of unraveling the thickening of the influence of the matter upon the believer’s soul, so that the soul becomes “transparent” to the Holy Ghost and to Christ; the grace received from the Holy Baptism it is actualized so much than it passes in the first-plan of the human being, and it overwhelms the matter of which the body is built, not in the sense of annulling it, but in the sense of spiritualizing it, of deifying it:

“(...) *the soul becomes transparent for God, or God becomes transparent to the soul. Thus, the holiness is the state of transparence of the Ghost as subject for the soul, in the same time with the transparence of the soul as subject for God. Through this transparency, there can be seen-through, the Son and the Father. This transparency is identical to an accentuated state of sensitiveness for God and for people. This sensitiveness is produced by the Ghost (...)*”³¹¹

Father Stăniloae highlights the fact that the work of the Holy Ghost takes place in close correlation with our work of bettering ourselves, of removing from us the slag of the

³¹⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Sfântul Duh în Revelație și în Biserică” („Holy Ghost in Revelation and into Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, p. 231.

³¹¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Sfântul Duh în Revelație și în Biserică” („Holy Ghost in Revelation and into Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, p. 233.

worldly, for unveiling the clarified into fire gold of the soul that works for being saved. But the work of the Holy Ghost potentiates our work, and the more efficient we work the more the Holy Ghost sensitizes us towards God.

Christ Jesus, our Lord and God, was the only human person – and God in the same time – within Whom the Holy Ghost fully descended. A very important aspect, that comes to strengthen the dogma of the Holy Trinity, it is that the Holy Ghost is in the Son as He was also before Embodiment. As through Embodiment, the Son remains in the bosom of the Father, Whom He never leaves:

*“The Ghost rests permanently, as Hypostasis, upon the Son and in His state of Embodiment.”*³¹²

Father Stăniloae shows also that:

*“(...) The Church is the Revelation that continues to be active through Ghost and power.”*³¹³

Behold why, through the power and through the work of the Holy Ghost, by permanently actualizing within Church the Word of God, the Church can be considered as laboratory of salvation.

II. 4. Orthodox Icon as Revelation through Images – Savior Instrument within Church’s Laboratory

The Orthodox Church is adorned with icons, whose images show us God, and His Saints as they look like in the future life. This painted images, are mediator to us, and helper in our endeavors to be saved. The icons are one more instrument in the laboratory of the Church, and they guide us on the way of salvation.

We want to highlight here that, in an era when the sciences of communication were in an incipient phase, Father Stăniloae has the genius of approaching the aspect of

³¹² Dumitru Stăniloae, „Sfântul Duh în Revelație și în Biserică” („Holy Ghost in Revelation and into Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, p. 234.

³¹³ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Sfântul Duh în Revelație și în Biserică” („Holy Ghost in Revelation and into Church”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, p. 236.

communicating³¹⁴ the Revelation, and of specifying the main ways – word, action, image – through which the Revelation is realized as act of communicating the divine truth:

*“(...) The Revelation hasn’t been done only through acts and words, through which the Revelation continues to work within souls, but also through images (...)”*³¹⁵;

and,

*“In fact, between acts and words, on one hand, and images, on the other hand, there is not report of independence (...) The word and the image, they are interior to each other. Except that within word it dominates the meaning, and within image it dominates the shape. But neither the meaning excludes the shape, nor the shape is without meaning.”*³¹⁶

Father Dumitru Stăniloae establishes a connection of a great finesse between word and image, by showing that their meeting takes place in the Mysteries of the Church:

“Almost any word of the Revelation it is an image-word, an embodied sense, and the acts of the

³¹⁴ Approaching the communication of the Revelation from the standing point of the semiotics, it brings a special difficulty concerning the icon, because the conceptual apparatus of the semiotic used the term *icon* (the same used in English language to name the religious *icon*), namely the before last in the list of the so-called signs: sem, symptom, index, **icon**, symbol, and name (Thomas A. Sebeok). The sign named *icon* is defined, for instance, by the illustrious linguist and theoretician of Bible translating, Eugene A. Nida, through the relation between sign and referred: *“The iconic signs are based on a similarity between sign and referred.”* (Eugene A. Nida, *Traducerea sensurilor (Translating the Meanings)*, introductory study, interview, translation and notes by Rodica Dimitriu – Iasi: European Institute, 2004, p. 46). But we stress here the fact that the *religious icon* it isn’t a simple icon sign, but it includes a great complexity of content, a part of which is expressed through image, colors, and symbols, and the most part of it is generated through the interaction of the **religious icon** with the receptor person, this interaction being determined by idiolect, and by sociolect.

³¹⁵ Dumitru Stăniloae, *O teologie a icoanei, studii (A Theology of the Icon, Studies)*, Publishing House of Anastasia Foundation, Bucharest, 2005, p. 23.

³¹⁶ Father Stăniloae quotes here from Patriarch Nicephorus the Confessor: „But the words are icons of the things.”

Revelation are real acts, but acts which adopt an embodied shape and expression, for they touch the seen world, and they are meaningful acts.”³¹⁷

Father Stăniloae synthesizes the problems related to expressing the Revelation through icons, in two main categories:

“(...) the kinds of images through which God is revealed, and the mode in which the images are born in the mind of the organ (of the salvation, o. n.), under divine influence, namely their subjective-objective character (...)”³¹⁸.

His holiness concludes that:

“(...) the images are the unavoidable way of unveiling God, to the human spirit”³¹⁹;

And he accentuates:

“(...) the importance of the images as means of the Revelation (...)”³²⁰.

Father Stăniloae considers images as vehicles of the spirit, through which the ghost receives, or offers, spiritual knowledge. The pure material, says his holiness, are presented with the help of the science, namely by using digits and formulas, but when there intervene the necessity of a transfer of spiritual information, the image, as “embodiment” of the spirit, it is indispensable:

“We reckon that revealed images are inevitably produced at the meeting point between spirit and the seen shape; the images isn’t but the form of the

³¹⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, *O teologie a icoanei, studii (A Theology of the Icon, Studies)*... p. 23.

³¹⁸ Dumitru Stăniloae, *O teologie a icoanei, studii (A Theology of the Icon, Studies)*... p. 23.

³¹⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *O teologie a icoanei, studii (A Theology of the Icon, Studies)*... p. 23. This subjects needs a thorough study concerning the psychology and the sociology of the image, in the knowledge and in the man’s living in general, and concerning man’s evolution on the road of salvation, within Church, especially.

³²⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, *O teologie a icoanei, studii (A Theology of the Icon, Studies)*... p. 24.

spirit's apparition, through a seen shape. The man being himself an embodied spirit, he cannot notice and express the spirit in its purity, but only through the screen of a seen shape. The human spirit himself is together-grown with such a screen, and he is in an indissoluble connection with the whole world of seen shapes, through which he knows and he expresses his reflection. The spiritual reality, especially, cannot be noticed and expressed by the man, who is embodied spirit – in himself.”³²¹

God cannot be expressed, in His essence, by the man, because any human way of expressing, any word or images, it is superficial and partial. So that, the icon also, as reflecting the divine and the divinity through images, it is imperfect. But, any expressing of the divine reality done by man, it includes the image, either be it generated (suggested) by word or embodied in icon. There doesn't exist, in a cataphatic mode, man's communication with and about God, without implying the generating of the image, as process of thinking. Father Stăniloae says that:

“Only a totally apophatic theology (of the silence, of denying any enunciation about God) it is free of images.”³²²

We would dare to say that, maybe, not even in a total apophatism, when the rationality totally ceases its work, the human being is not totally outside image, for the “Tabor's light”, or the “most-luminous darkness”, they can be considered images, despite being inexpressible.

Father Stăniloae defines two categories of images present in Revelation. Thus, in the Old Testament, God manifests Himself in a “*passing manner, through one or another of His energies, in a seen form*”³²³. Even if some of the manifestations of God, presented in the Old Testament have a longer duration in human time, they have a “(...) character of inconsistent shadows, in comparison to the consistent image of

³²¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *O teologie a icoanei, studii (A Theology of the Icon, Studies)*... p. 25.

³²² Dumitru Stăniloae, *O teologie a icoanei, studii (A Theology of the Icon, Studies)*... p. 25.

³²³ Dumitru Stăniloae, *O teologie a icoanei, studii (A Theology of the Icon, Studies)*... p. 26.

*the humanity of Christ*³²⁴. And Christ, by embodying Himself, He brings through His works, images with an “ontological” character. The works of the Son of God: the Embodiment, the Holy life within world, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, and the Ascent to heavens, they are taken by the Orthodox icon as: **“the most alive and the most ontological image of the Godhead”**³²⁵:

*“(...) the icon, so much honored by Orthodoxy, it is the representation, by using the means of the art, of this image of God assumed by the Son of God. Christ as man, He is the human image of God as man; and He is God Himself, in the same time.”*³²⁶

Father Stăniloae shows that the symbols and the images from the Old Testament use the natural elements and the animals, because:

*“The man’s level still not allowed to overcome some of the nature’s elements as image of God.”*³²⁷

Man’s spiritual capacity in general, under the work of the Holy Ghost, it evolves during history in an ascending way. Of course that the general spirituality, statistically speaking, it is not the weighted sum of the individual spiritualities. Even within the most spiritualized company, there can be found a non-spiritual individual; so as in the folds of the most beastly society, by the mercy of God, there can survive a saint. Father Stăniloae affirms, once more, the vision of his holiness that history is given to the man for him to evolve within it, and to become capable of receiving the Revelation:

*“The history of the Revelation is tied to the history of the humanity. On the measure the man spiritually progresses, or grows up in the conscience of his superiority upon nature, **he realizes that he is the most adequate image of God and he actually***

³²⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, *O teologie a icoanei, studii (A Theology of the Icon, Studies)*... p. 26.

³²⁵ Dumitru Stăniloae, *O teologie a icoanei, studii (A Theology of the Icon, Studies)*... p. 25.

³²⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, *O teologie a icoanei, studii (A Theology of the Icon, Studies)*... p. 25.

³²⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, *O teologie a icoanei, studii (A Theology of the Icon, Studies)*... p. 26.

becomes this image³²⁸. As long as he didn't understand this, as long as he was timorous due to the stateliness and the force of the natural elements, he couldn't represent God, in a dignified manner, in front of the nature.”³²⁹

The image of resurrected and ascended Christ, represented by icons, it constitutes for the believers who searches for the salvation within Church:

“(...) a peak he tends towards, a force that attracts him.”³³⁰

Father Stăniloae establishes a similitude between the Gospel of Christ – the New Law, which comes to fulfill the old law –, and the expressing the Revelation through icons, which replace the prophetic images, the inconsistent images, the images expressed through shadows. This fact takes place:

“(...) by installing this image of God, and also of this culminating model of man, Who is Christ, in front of the people (...)”³³¹

By Christ's coming amongst people, the images of the Old Testament:

“(...) have been fulfilled (...) in their whole amplitude, and they have even been made obsolete; they have become purposeless.”³³²

There exists the danger that the images coming from the human mind (imagination), to limit, to diminish the Revelation,

³²⁸ Father Stăniloae shows here how the man, on the measure of his spiritualization, under the work of receiving the Revelation, he becomes conscious that he is god and son of God. Behold that he becomes capable, through spiritualization, to receive the words of the revelation, uttered by Christ God: “Jesus answered them: It is not written in your Law that “I said: you are gods?”” (ROB: John 10: 34) (In KJB we have: “Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? (John 10: 34)).

³²⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *O teologie a icoanei, studii (A Theology of the Icon, Studies)*... p. 27.

³³⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, *O teologie a icoanei, studii (A Theology of the Icon, Studies)*... p. 28.

³³¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *O teologie a icoanei, studii (A Theology of the Icon, Studies)*... p. 28.

³³² Dumitru Stăniloae, *O teologie a icoanei, studii (A Theology of the Icon, Studies)*... p. 28.

or to even bring the believers³³³ to straying, being thus an abomination to God. Father Stăniloae shows that, the Holy Fathers of the Church:

“(...) warn us against any images, imaginings, visions, for into Christ, the Christians have more than any imagination. They even warn us against images and visions which would have Christ as their object, because through faith and living we know about the theandric depths of Christ more than images or visions about Him could help us.”³³⁴

Christ, through His embodiment, He shows us God, and therefore he embodies all our images about God. Father Stăniloae quotes from Anglican theologian Austin Farrer, who affirms that Christ has brought a “*rebirth of the images*”³³⁵.

The real image of the embodied Christ, it is the foundation of all our words through which we communicate with God, and about God. But as any natural process, as it is also the human thinking, suffer through development a series of changes, and sometimes degenerations or deviations from the truth, or from the state it started in, there must be a mechanism of verification, and to permanently keeping the human thinking, and its expressing through words and images, in the truth of the Revelation. One of these means, through which within Orthodox Church, the expressing of the Revelation is kept into truth, it is the use of icons, which permanently bring before our eyes the real image of the resurrected Christ – the meaning and the foundation of our faith:

“The words must always lean on the perfect image of God, which is the humanity of Christ, or Christ as man. To this purpose the icons of Christ serve. (...) in his internal imagination, the believer can introduce subjective elements in the image about Christ, which to deviate from His real image. That’s why the icons

³³³ See in this sense also the brilliant analysis done by Priest Professor PhD Vasile Vlad, in his book entitled: *Rugăciune și Imaginea. Perspectivă Bisericescă (Prayer and Imagination. A Churchly Perspective)*, Renașterea Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca, 2013.

³³⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, *O teologie a icoanei, studii (A Theology of the Icon, Studies)*... p. 29.

³³⁵ Dumitru Stăniloae, *O teologie a icoanei, studii (A Theology of the Icon, Studies)*... p. 29.

are painted according to the canons from ever, which do not allow to be added any subjective element.”³³⁶

In the continuation of his analysis referring to the Orthodox Icon, his holiness affirms that, in the Mysteries officiated by the Church, there are “mimed” the acts of Christ. We would prefer to replace this term with the expression “are being actualized” the acts of Christ. This is because, of course, the celebration of the Holy Mysteries, it surely has an imitative component, related to the acts of Christ; but the whole fact is not reduced only to this action of imitating, and the continuation of this imitation has quite real consequences in the spiritual plan. We imitate the acts of Christ done at the Last Supper, but at epiclesis the bread and the wine become the Most-Precious Body and the Most-Holy Blood of Lord Jesus. Even Father Stăniloae completes his affirmation by adding:

“Thus, the icons and the Mysteries are a keeping, always present and fighting in the conscience and in the life of the believers, of real ontological image of God, Who is Christ, or more precisely, the humanity of Christ. They are modes of continuous efficiency of the central and definitive image of the culminating Revelation in the human life.”³³⁷

An aspect to be avoided when painting icons is that of manifesting too much subjectivism from the part of the one who paints. The subjective perceiving and expressing the truth of the Revelation, when painting icons, it leads to hypostasizing the Son of Man, by passing His image through the subjectivity of the painter, and thus, the **en-hypostasizing** through which the Embodied Christ represents, expresses, and communicates to all human persons, who find themselves represented within Him, it can be diminished, or even annulled. Imprinting a too personal vision of the painter upon the image of Christ, it leads to diminishing the value of truth, of the resulted images, for the other people. Thus, **a too subjectively painted icon, it is no longer an efficient help**

³³⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, *O teologie a icoanei, studii (A Theology of the Icon, Studies)*... p. 30.

³³⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, *O teologie a icoanei, studii (A Theology of the Icon, Studies)*... p. 33.

for the salvation of the people. The painter of icons must avoid painting his own image (his subjectivity) on the icon of the Savior.

Father Stăniloae also shows that, a mechanism of maintaining the painted icon, into truth, and of maintaining the coherence (the intrinsic unity) of it, is that of submitting the entire activity of painting the icon:

*“(...) to that spiritual dominance which presses upon the capacity of specifying of the organ of the Revelation; (...) noticing that spiritual dominance, done by the artist or by the organ of the Revelation, it can be called “spiritual sight” or “sight above seeing”.”*³³⁸

In other words, the whole spiritualization which, through endeavors and ascesis, the painter of icons accumulates it, being him transfigured / transformed under its action, it keeps him into truth, it helps him “seeing” the spiritual things, it guides him, and it sets his artistic imagination in order. **To the icon painter the artistic element is so spiritualized, than it is transparent to the presence and to the work of the Ghost. On this measure we can affirm that icons are the work of the Holy Ghost.**

The spiritualization of the icons painter, it makes him to become so transparent to the Ghost of God, than he doesn't “imagine” what he is painting, but the Ghost brings, in the mind of the painter, the “image”, and helps him to lay it, masterly, on the icon. The subjectivity of the icons painter it is overwhelmed by the objectivity of the presence and of the work of the Holy Ghost. Not the icons painter works, he being only a utensil of the Ghost, but the Ghost works through him.

A way to be certificated the truth of the icon, and its objectivity, it is the fact of being accepted by all believers, or at least by their overwhelming majority, this fact being the proof that that icon it preserves, as image of the Person painted on it, the efficiency and the general addressability of the respective Person. The icon doesn't diminish, through the subjectivity manifested in it – of the one who has painted it –

³³⁸ Dumitru Stăniloae, *O teologie a icoanei, studii (A Theology of the Icon, Studies)*... p. 33.

the power of the painted Person, to address Himself to everybody, to reveal Himself to all believers.

The Holy Ghost, by working upon the intellect of the icons painter, He transforms it, He imprints on it the result of His action. The Holy Ghost, as God, being always the Same, “to Whom there is no changing or shadow of moving”³³⁹, He imprints – the Holy Fathers say – certain spiritual templates, the presence of which in icons, it can constitute another guarantee of the icons painter not-deviating from the revealed truth. Father Stăniloae recalls and strengthens this teaching of the Holy Fathers of the Church, but he also develops it, by affirming that:

*“Although, there happens also that the divine “spiritual template” dresses Himself up in the images taken from seer’s images luggage. But between the spiritual template and the shapes in which He dresses Himself up, there is such an adequate connection, so that the shapes seem to be inscribed in a potential template and gradually become definite to the seer, who is accustomed through his sensibility to concretize everything. The images from the memory of the seer seem to polarize themselves under the attraction force of something kindred to them from the spiritual template.”*³⁴⁰

In other words, there is a coherence of truth between the spiritual content of the Revelation revealed through icon, and the concrete manner the icons painter paints in.

Father Stăniloae shows that the divine templates aren’t dry, mechanical ones, which no longer imply the cogitation of the icons painter; instead, they:

³³⁹ Synodial Epistle of Saint James, chapter 1, verse 17: “All the good giving and all the consummate gift are from above, descending from the Father of the lights, to Whom there is no changing or shadow of moving”. In KJB we have: “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with Whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.”

³⁴⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, *O teologie a icoanei, studii (A Theology of the Icon, Studies)*... p. 234.

“(...) cause noticing of spiritual order, combined with the cogitation, or pure and simple above cogitation, but causing cogitation.”³⁴¹

His holiness formulates a very expressive definition of the man as heart:

“(...) the heart, namely the man from within each of us.”³⁴²

The divine templates of the icon, they sometimes, through the cogitation of the icons painter:

“(...) cause a mobilization of sensitive images, a new combination of theirs, a new dimensioning and a discovering within themselves of new significations”³⁴³,

...but this doesn't lead to a “changing” of the truth expressed by that icon.

The watcher (the receptor, the organ of the Revelation) who is in front of an icon, he feels that the truth of that icon it imposes to him, without being necessary an effort of thinking and feeling. The truth of an icon, that takes its value of truth from Revelation, it exercises a savior pressure upon the believer. The believer who looks at the icons from the Church he feels like this icons urge him spiritually, they draw him towards truth and towards God, and they sustain him in his spiritual effort of being a good Christian, and in his struggle on the road of salvation.

Father Stăniloae shows that the divine templates through which the Revelation is being expressed, they become within the icons painter some sort of commandment uttered in words:

“The imperative force of the objective of the Revelation has taken for the organ of the Revelation

³⁴¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *O teologie a icoanei, studii (A Theology of the Icon, Studies)*... p. 35.

³⁴² Dumitru Stăniloae, *O teologie a icoanei, studii (A Theology of the Icon, Studies)*... p. 36.

³⁴³ Dumitru Stăniloae, *O teologie a icoanei, studii (A Theology of the Icon, Studies)*... p. 36.

the shape or aural image of some kind of a voice, of some kind of a word.”³⁴⁴

Starting from the role of the icons as means of “materializing”, of seen representation of the Godhead, Father Stăniloae brightly defines Christendom, as:

“(...) Christendom is the religion of revealing God in the «substantial human image».”³⁴⁵

In Orthodox Christendom **the presence of the icon is fundamental, for it brings through it the representations through images of the objective reality of the spiritual reality of God**, reality that people, otherwise, could not understand or explain to other persons, for the faith of the ones who believe to pass into the ones who do not believe, and realizing thus the growing of the Kingdom of God, by extending it in the soul of all the human beings.

The Orthodox icon is also a source of the communion between man and God, and mediator of the communion, but also manifestation of this communion. Coming into Church for searching for the salvation, **the believer leans his soul on the truth of the icons, like a blind man leans on a walking stick**, but then, by receiving the Revelation, he is delivered of his spiritual blindness, by the mercy of the One Who gives the sight, of the One Who is the sight itself, namely God.

Father Stăniloae, starting from the arguments of the ones who deny the icons as means of collaboration between God and men, he shows that:

“It was said that the Ecumenical Synods from East didn’t establish but the dogmas concerning God, and not also the ones about the collaboration of the man in the work of salvation. (...) But nothing can stand next to God. (...) A teaching in which it predominates the image of the man, elevated at the rank of central dogma, it would mean a self-divinization of the man.”³⁴⁶

³⁴⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, *O teologie a icoanei, studii (A Theology of the Icon, Studies)*... p. 38.

³⁴⁵ Dumitru Stăniloae, *O teologie a icoanei, studii (A Theology of the Icon, Studies)*... p. 41.

³⁴⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, *O teologie a icoanei, studii (A Theology of the Icon, Studies)*... p. 49.

By making a very inspired parallel between dogmas, and icons as savior means, which are in the full respect of the dogmas, Father Stăniloae affirms that:

*“Dogma, in the undiluted meaning of the word, it is a mirror in which, there is not allowed to be seen, in the first plan, but only God.”*³⁴⁷

Father Stăniloae calls the dogma as **“heavenly mirror”**³⁴⁸. We dare, in the same spirit, to call the **dogma**, but also the **icon**, as **windows towards heavens**.

There are, even when we speak about East, as environment of the Christendom, differences of approaching and developing the iconography. There is a part of the East that wasn't propitious to developing the dogmas and the icons. Behold how Father Stăniloae, eloquently describes that part of the East:

*“We do not talk about the Northern East. That one didn't participate to dogmas' settling, and it never absorbed them as limpid and ordinator grounds of the life. The Northern East is the vast steppe in which reigns the killing of life whistling of the irrational passions. What in West is slow erosion in the Northern East is a savage and momentary tearing apart.”*³⁴⁹

The icons' presence within Orthodox Church isn't only an esthetic thing, and it is not provided only through the prism of the Tradition, but it is dogmatically founded, and it is indispensable to Orthodoxy. Father Stăniloae shows that:

*“The dogma about the holy icons it is also a teaching about God, and therefore is a dogma in the full meaning of the word.”*³⁵⁰

³⁴⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, *O teologie a icoanei, studii (A Theology of the Icon, Studies)*... p. 49.

³⁴⁸ Dumitru Stăniloae, *O teologie a icoanei, studii (A Theology of the Icon, Studies)*... p. 49.

³⁴⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *O teologie a icoanei, studii (A Theology of the Icon, Studies)*... p. 50.

³⁵⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, *O teologie a icoanei, studii (A Theology of the Icon, Studies)*... p. 50.

His holiness also affirms, against some wrong and roving perceiving and interpretations, that the dogma of the holy icons:

*“(...) it does **NOT** mean, as it seems to some people, the elevation of some parts of the nature to godlike level, an idolatrizing of the seen things.”³⁵¹*

Christendom is founded on the Embodiment of the Son of God, in the same time full man and full God, God Who comes to dwell amongst people. The body and the face of the Man-God are known to us, and that's why we can paint them on icons. Father Stăniloae shows that:

*“We do not know how the Son of God was before the Embodiment, neither how the Father and the Holy Ghost are. We do not know, in other words, how God is in Himself, but we know that **the Godhead of the Son after the Embodiment it is no longer a reality separated from the human body and face.** We do not know how Godhead is in Himself, but we do know that the Godhead of the Son showed Himself to the people and He will show Himself to the people forever and ever, through the real countenance of man and only through it.”³⁵²*

It also results from here, the necessary and objective character of the icon, namely because the man cannot represent, cannot “see” God, but only in the image of Jesus Christ on the icons. In this sense the icons are a help to the one who wants to believe, for the man cannot believe, at least at the beginning, in something he cannot imagine. And if he doesn't believe, how will be him saved?

The iconoclastic heresy argues that Christ cannot be realized on icons in His totality as God and man, but only on the aspect of his human side. And representing this human Person would lead to losing or to depriving His representation, somehow, of His Godhead. Father Stăniloae shows this affirmation as being totally wrong, because:

³⁵¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *O teologie a icoanei, studii (A Theology of the Icon, Studies)*... p. 51.

³⁵² Dumitru Stăniloae, *O teologie a icoanei, studii (A Theology of the Icon, Studies)*... p. 52.

“The humanity³⁵³ of Christ neither can be separated from God nor merged. The Godhead of Christ necessarily and undividedly, comprises His Godhead.”³⁵⁴

His holiness also adds that, the ones who met Jesus Christ during His work within world, they were seeing at Him – of course, the ones who believed in Him – more than the simple human countenance, for otherwise they wouldn't have been able to see God and the Son of God in Him³⁵⁵. In this sense Father Stăniloae says:

“Savior Jesus Christ bore the Godhead Himself, under the human visible countenance. Godhead is not something incompatible with the way of being and of manifesting of the man’s spirit.”³⁵⁶

The icon of Christ renders with fidelity the image of Christ. Father Stăniloae affirms that:

“(...) we are not wrong to affirm that the actual image of Christ from the Orthodox Church, which avoids the renewals, it renders the characteristic elements of His face, preserved through tradition just from the time of the apostles.”³⁵⁷

Another aspect of painting icons is the “schematizing”, respectively what we would call a sublimation of the hypostatic (personal) human features, features Father Stăniloae calls

³⁵³ Father Stăniloae uses here the Romanian word, invented by him: **omenitate**. This specific word is impossible to be translated by employing a direct lexical equivalence, and therefore we are trying here to explain it as far as we can: this word is obtained by transforming **umanitate (humanity)**, through the replacement of **um** with **om (man, human)**. We believe that the best descriptive locutions for **omenitate** it would be: **quality of being human** or, maybe: **having the features of a human being**.

³⁵⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, *O teologie a icoanei, studii (A Theology of the Icon, Studies)*... p. 52.

³⁵⁵ Luke 9: 20: “But who do you say I am? Answering, Peter said Him: The Christ of God.” In KJB we have: “He said unto them, But whom say ye that I am? Peter answering said, The Christ of God.”

³⁵⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, *O teologie a icoanei / studii (A Theology of the Icon, Studies)*... p. 453.

³⁵⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, *O teologie a icoanei, studii (A Theology of the Icon, Studies)*... p. 55.

them as “**natural humanity**”³⁵⁸ ³⁵⁹. Christ, through enhypostatizing, He takes the general human features upon Himself, except the original sin, and that’s why on icons:

“(...) *His face must express only the general, the abstract features of the humanity*³⁶⁰, *being left aside everything we encounter in the concrete face of the natural humans. There will be rendered only the foundation lines, the formal frame of the humanity.*”³⁶¹

In conclusion, the Orthodox icon is one of the important means used by the Church in its mission as laboratory of salvation. Icon is one of the main means of communicating the Revelation, and of intellectually and spiritually supporting the one who believes, and to permanently remind him the reality of the Embodiment of the Savior Jesus Christ, and the reality of His works during His living within world, and the Sacrifice on the Cross, and the Resurrection, and the Ascent with the body to heavens.

Icon is also bearer of victory, by painting the face of the Lord’s Mother, Who gave birth to the Not-Comprised One, accomplishing the plan of God from ever, laying a beginning to the salvation of the man and of the creation.

In the same time, the icon is bearer of hope and promise, by painting the images of the saints, and thus showing us that salvation is possible within the Church of Christ, because they, who believed and gave themselves as sacrifices, to the Lord, behold they have been saved.

³⁵⁸ Dumitru Stăniloae, *O teologie a icoanei, studii (A Theology of the Icon, Studies)*... p. 56.

³⁵⁹ See also footnote no. 352.

³⁶⁰ See also footnote no. 352.

³⁶¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *O teologie a icoanei, studii (A Theology of the Icon, Studies)*... p. 56.

III. MYSTERIES, AS SAVIOR WORK WITHIN CHURCH

III. 1. **Mysteries as Stairs of Our Transcending towards God, the One into Trinity, the One Extolled through Christ, during Our Earthly Life**³⁶²

Christ comes within world as God and as man, for God to realize the maximum, the absolute closeness, between Himself and the human creatures. God embodies Himself for fulfilling the plan from ever, of salvation of the man and of the creation. Father Stăniloae shows that the union of the humanity with Christ had to be realized:

*“(...) in three modes: (a) (...) the human had to be united with Godhead in a unique hypostasis (...) for those ones (the people, o. n.), (...), to become forever sons of the heavenly Father. (b) (...) The Son of God had to be united especially with a Virgin, taking from Her His humanity clean of sin, and therefore a humanity totally opened to God. (c) The people had to be united with the Son of God, Who became man, as distinct persons, like they were created by God, not-confounded to God, and neither amongst themselves. These are the three modes of human’s transcending to the union with God, the first two ones being necessary to the third one.”*³⁶³

The union with Christ is realized within Church by participating to the celebration of the Mysteries. Father Stăniloae calls the Mysteries as stairs, through which it is realized the transcending of the believers towards God, but in the same time it is realized a “transcending” of the human persons towards his fellow humans. Describing the epektasis, namely the process of advancing towards the communion with God, Father Stăniloae describes the state of salvation, even if he doesn’t call it like so, respectively as being that stage in transcending towards God from which, at a given moment, you can no longer come out of it, namely one can no longer fall off it:

³⁶² Title taken from: Dumitru Stăniloae, *Chipul nemuritor al lui Dumnezeu (The Immortal Image of God)*, volume I, Publishing House of Anastasia, Bucharest, 2005.

³⁶³ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Chipul nemuritor al lui Dumnezeu (The Immortal Image of God)*, volume I, p. 202.

*“Forever, God, and his fellow humans, and even his own self, they remain to him mysteries in the endless communication of which, one can penetrate increasingly deeper, but starting on a certain place, no longer being possible to get out of them, but eternally resting himself in them. **The end of the transcending it means only a form of the transcending beyond which there cannot be another.**”³⁶⁴*

Deification rests upon human being as the Holy Ghost rests within Church. The man becomes Church of Godhead, and his soul becomes altar, where the Holy Ghost embodies our Lord Jesus Christ – this state being the salvation.

By participating to the celebrating and by receiving the Mysteries, the man enters an intimate relation with God, relation that:

“(...) accentuates the man’s quality as unique person, of eternal value, escaped from under the force - depersonalized through passions - of the nature (...)”³⁶⁵

Father Stăniloae affirms that the man:

“(...) is received in each Mystery, as unique person, in the communion forever with Christ, the godlike Person become also man forever, in communion with the Trinity of the godlike Persons, also indicated by Their names, being provided through this the eternal happiness.”³⁶⁶

Behold that through impartation with the Holy Mysteries, the human person reaches at God, and this

³⁶⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Chipul nemuritor al lui Dumnezeu (The Immortal Image of God)*, vol. I, p. 202-203.

³⁶⁵ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Chipul nemuritor al lui Dumnezeu (The Immortal Image of God)*, vol. I, p. 203.

³⁶⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Chipul nemuritor al lui Dumnezeu (The Immortal Image of God)*, vol. I, p. 203.

reaching, as a stage of salvation, is characterized by receiving the eternal happiness as a gift.

To be saved, the man must receive, within Church, the Mysteries, for him to be transcending increasingly more towards God, towards the union with the Most Holy Trinity.

The Mysteries have a capital importance in men's salvation, salvation that continues after the Ascent of Christ to heavens, salvation that consists in the union of the people with Christ, for them to resurrect, at their turn, into Christ. This union has, in the Orthodox Church, the Holy Mysteries, as means to be realized.

Father Stăniloae shows that:

*"At the basis of the conception about Mysteries, of the Orthodox Church, it stays the trust in the possibility of the work of the godlike Ghost of Christ, through a man, upon another man, through the mediation of the bodies and of the matter between them, in the environment of the Church, as mysterious body of Christ. It is the trust that the godlike Ghost can work, through the mediation of the human spirit, upon the cosmic matter in general, and upon other persons. Through the hand of the man flow spiritual powers upon another man, either directly through the body or through other material matter."*³⁶⁷

Through the man and through the matter, works the Holy Ghost. The work of the Holy Ghost and the work of the man, in celebrating the Mysteries, they cannot be separated.

*"Within Mystery one cannot draw a frontier between the movement of the man who works and the power of the godlike Ghost. (...) through him (through the priest, o. n.) works the Holy Ghost, Who blows within the whole environment of the Church, as mysterious body within which works Christ."*³⁶⁸

³⁶⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology), volume III, Second Edition, Publishing House of the Biblical and Missionary Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 1997, p. 4.

³⁶⁸ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology), vol. III, p. 4.

For the Mystery to be efficient, it must be worked upon a man who believes. The Mystery doesn't act forcedly upon the one who doesn't believe. The Mystery, by transmitting the love of God upon the man, it must be received with faith and with love by the recipient:

*“(...) the receiver of the Mystery opens himself to the full action of the godlike power transmitted by the officiator, through his faith, in the environment of the Church, the field of the work of Christ.”*³⁶⁹

One can see here also how Father Stăniloae permanently highlights that any savior action must take place within Church; only within the savior laboratory of the Church, only through the mediation of the Church, the transcending towards God, and the savior union of the man with Him, they become possible.

The Mystery imposes communion between the officiator and the one for whom the Mystery is officiated. The more this communion is greater into faith, the more efficient are the consequences. Father Stăniloae described how the communion between the celebrator and the receiver starts from their common faith into the Holy Ghost, and it continues to the material elements, as there would be the sacramental touching:

*“(...) The Mystery is officiated at the encounter of two human subjects opened through faith, to the Holy Ghost, in the environment of the Church, encounter that is prolonged also in the bodily touching between them, or through the mediation of a material.”*³⁷⁰

But his holiness specifies that:

“Not the material, neither the uttered words, nor the done gestures, being taken in themselves, constitute the Mystery; but the Mystery is constituted in the

³⁶⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (*The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*), vol. III, p. 4.

³⁷⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (*The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*), vol. III, p. 5.

encounter in faith of the two persons in the environment of the Church full of Holy Ghost (...)"³⁷¹

Celebrating the Mysteries implies using the matter as an intermediary, matter that is overwhelmed and transformed by the Holy Ghost. That's why, Father Stăniloae affirms that:

*"The general basis of the Church's Mysteries is the faith that God can work upon creature in creature's visible reality. In this sense, the general meaning of the Mystery is the union of God with the entire creation. This is a Mystery that comprises everything. There is no part of the reality not comprised in this Mystery."*³⁷²

Each element of the creation, says Father Stăniloae, it is a mystery at its turn, for it is connected to the other elements, and, in the end, it is connected to God, without being confounded to the other elements. And in the frame of the creation, in the middle of these elements, the man -creature, at his turn - he has:

*"(...) a special position (...) He is the image and the main organ of the great and dynamic mystery of the union of the Logos with the entire creation, for, on one hand, even his being is the union of the spirit with the matter, and through this he unites with himself the whole creation and the creation with God."*³⁷³

But the man is destined, through his creation itself, to be "in the image and in the likeness of God", and in this sense, Father Stăniloae shows that:

"Through man is especially accentuated the work of God upon man, in order to transfigure and

³⁷¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 5.

³⁷² Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 5.

³⁷³ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 5.

spiritualize it. This is the natural basis of the Mysteries of the Church, the basis of the fact that (...) a man can transmit to another the power of God.”³⁷⁴

Through the original sin, the man separates himself voluntarily from God, by transgressing His commandment. This separation, affirms Father Stăniloae, it is transmitted within the entire creations:

“The man was capable, through his will, and through his connection with all the things, to produce also the division amongst all things, as also between them and God, their unifier and ultimate principle.”³⁷⁵

In His great love for people, God sends His Son Himself in the world, to unite again the creation and the man with Himself, to reestablish the connection of the man with God, and through man, the connection of the whole creation, which the man has the task to spiritualize it and to bring it back to union with God:

“It is realized, thus, a new Mystery, of a tighter union between Creator and creature. It is the Mystery of Christ.”³⁷⁶

Through the Mystery of Christ, shows Father Stăniloae:

“The paradox of uniting the created with the uncreated, it appears now even more accentuated or accentuated to the supreme level. God Himself is man, the Creator is also creature, the not-comprised deep, and the all-doer subject, becomes also human rationality, with the conscience of its limitation within body and, noticeably, the infinite becomes also finite, filling the last one with the first one. Through this, the finite horizon of knowing the

³⁷⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 6.

³⁷⁵ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 6.

³⁷⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 7.

supreme reality it becomes fully transparent within man."³⁷⁷

Through Embodiment, Christ reestablishes the dignity of the man, of being the connection between creation and God. This dignity of the man, given to the man by God Himself, actualized and restored through the coming within world of the Son of God, it gives the man the potentiality of acting upon creation, of deifying it. But this power of acting upon creation, the man can use it also for acting upon other men, for the humans are also parts of the creation. Behold how the man becomes a transmitter of the uncreated divine energies, and co-worker with God. This dignity justifies the role of the man of celebrating the Holy Mysteries, in which, through the man's work, there works God Himself.

Father Stăniloae, like all the great creators of theological substance, when he speaks about the concept of Mystery, he emits a new kerugma, calling as Mysteries: 1. The Mystery of the Creation, 2. The Mystery of Christ, and 3. The Mystery of the Church.

Through the restoration done by Christ, of the unity between man and God, and, consequently, also the restoration of the unity amongst people – for one implies another -, it comes to existence the Church, about which Father Stăniloae says that:

*"The Church is thus, the third Mystery, within which God the Word reestablishes and elevates to a more accentuated level His union with the world founded through the act of the creation, but weakened through the man's sin. One can say therefore, that **the creation itself is the Church, and the Church is the restored creation** and in course to be restored and made consummate. (...) Thus, **the notions of Church and Mystery, they coincide.**"³⁷⁸*

³⁷⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (*The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*), vol. III, p. 7.

³⁷⁸ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (*The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*), vol. III, p. 8.

His holiness goes even further in extrapolating the concept of Mystery, and he affirms that each component of the Church, **each believer, is, at his turn, a mystery.**

By analyzing the relation between the Mystery of the Church and the Mystery of Christ, Father Stăniloae shows that between them two there is no separation, for Christ is the Head of the Church and the Church is the mysterious Body of Christ.

The Mysteries from within Church, they have two sides: one of them visible – the matters, the gestures, the words, and the symbols used by the officiator, and the invisible side – the work of Christ through the Ghost within Church. Starting from here, Father Stăniloae shows that:

“(...) in the most special meaning, the character of Mysteries it is had by few visible works of the Church, instituted by Christ, through which Christ unites with Himself - and therefore with the Church - the singular persons who believe in Him and through whom He develops this union with them.”³⁷⁹

At the basis of our possibility to unite ourselves with Christ, there stay His savior acts: the Embodiment, the holy life within world and His mighty works, the Death on the Cross, the Resurrection, and the Ascent to heavens, as also the sending, at Pentecost, of the Holy Ghost within His Church. His ascended body has become totally transparent to the Godhead, and makes possible the union between created and uncreated, for, on one hand, He has a human material body, but a deified one, and on the other hand, He is in the same time God and One of the Trinity. On the same context, Father Stăniloae affirms that:

*“The Mysteries highlight, as also the Lord’s Embodiment, **the great importance of the human body and its eternal value** as transparent environment of the godlike richness and depths.”³⁸⁰*

³⁷⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology), vol. III, p. 9.

³⁸⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology), vol. III, p. 10.

The ritual acts and gestures, the words uttered by the ones who celebrate the Mysteries within Church, are the seen part of the Mysteries, as matters like: water, wine, bread, and oil; but, during the celebration of the Mysteries it is also invoked the presence and the work of the grace:

*“The grace, not being but the work of Christ, their (of the Mysteries, o. n.) unseen officiator is Christ.”*³⁸¹

Matters used to celebrate the Mysteries are transformed under the action of the grace of Christ:

*“Thus, Christ enters with His body, or with the energy of His clean body, within our body, through the materials used for celebrating the Mysteries, or through the gestures of the priest, for placing also within our body the beginning of the sanctification, but this doesn’t take place if there doesn’t take also place an effort from the part of the believer, when receiving the Mystery. One must accept with the whole seriousness **the Christological realism of the Mysteries** (...).”*³⁸²

Father Stăniloae specifies also the fact that, because the work of the Ghost of Christ is the one that sanctifies the materials of the Mysteries, and the believers, the separation between the visible part and the invisible one, it must remain only a way of studying, and, by no means, to generate a separate taking into consideration, of the two sides.

The Mysteries unite the believers with the Church of Christ, and therefore, with Himself:

“The Mysteries are the acts through which Christ recapitulates within Himself as Church, the people

³⁸¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (*The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*), vol. III, p. 11.

³⁸² Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (*The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*), vol. III, p. 13.

separated from God, and from each other, if they believe in Him.”³⁸³

Although the Mysteries are worked upon individual human persons, being given the fact that these ones are limbs of the Church of Christ, the Mysteries are worked by Christ upon His entire Church:

“(…), through Mysteries is being extended, is being maintained, and it spiritually grows up, the Church (…).”³⁸⁴

Speaking about the Holy Mysteries and the mode in which they are celebrated and received in the Orthodox Church, it offers Father Stăniloae the occasion to show, starting from the writings of the Holy Fathers of the Church, **“the inhabiting into truth”** of the Orthodox Church and, comparatively, the shortcoming of the Catholicism and of the Protestantism.

Christ institutes the Mysteries, for He worked them Himself, as long as He dwelled amongst people, and in the same time, He remains to the end of the time, the One Who works these mysteries within His Church: He is baptized, He receives the Holy Ghost upon Himself, He institutes the Eucharist, He is Hierarch³⁸⁵, He blesses the wedding, He heals the ill ones, and He left thus, to the Church, the duty of celebrating the seven Mysteries after His Ascent with the Body to heavens, but He works, in the same time, the Mysteries, through His Ghost and through His presence.

Father Stăniloae draws the attention upon the grave error of considering that Christ is absent from within His Church, and the Church has only a commemorative role, namely that of remembering, to the believers, Christ’s acts and deeds. This roving formalizes the celebration of the Mysteries,

³⁸³ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology), vol. III, p. 14.

³⁸⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology), volume III, p. 14.

³⁸⁵ Referring to the three dignities of Christ: Prophet, Hierarch, and Emperor, Father Stăniloae realizes a majestic analyze in his work entitled: *Iisus Hristos sau restaurarea omului* (Jesus Christ or the Man’s Restoration) (Omniscop Publishing House, Craiova, 1993), which we consider as a synthesis - of a capital importance - of the entire Orthodox Christendom, a synthesis that has an exhaustive catechetical richness.

and it empties them of their savior content. A church that is emptied of the presence and of the work of the Holy Ghost and of Christ, it become a theatrical congregation, within which the rituals have a formal character and they are fulfilled, by people, in a mechanical manner, on a horizontal plan, without elevating the believers to the height of the communion with God.

Christ commands the Apostles to work in His name. After His Ascent, the Apostles become the seen organs of His savior work within world. In Apostolic continuity:

“(...) the priest is the seen organ through whom, Christ from the Church, works in an unseen manner within Mysteries, or He grants the grace to the ones whom the Mysteries are administrated.”³⁸⁶

Father Stăniloae shows that:

“Christ as Person works in the most efficient mode, upon the human persons, through human persons. Only a human person can do expressive acts, namely intentional acts (...) and can utter words which clarify the meaning of what is being done and the intention aimed, through Mysteries, by Christ. The gestures of the priest touch the one who receives the Mystery (...) and they make the Mystery to have a deep efficiency within the being of the receiver.”³⁸⁷

The priest does not celebrate the Mysteries by his own, human authority, but he does the sacramental gestures in the name of the Church, and he takes his authority from within Church, from “**the empowerment from Christ**”³⁸⁸. Thus, the Church is the environment, the laboratory within which, by celebrating the Holy Mysteries, and by receiving these

³⁸⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 18.

³⁸⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 18.

³⁸⁸ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 19.

Mysteries, the man can receive the Holy Ghost and he can unite himself with Christ Himself, namely, he can be saved.

III. 2. Mystery of the Baptism

Father Stăniloae affirms about creation that it takes place like this:

“From the work of the Holy Ghost upon the waters, there were born into the Son all the definite forms of created existence, at the beginning of the world”³⁸⁹,

And the man was created:

“(… with the will of the Father, according to the image of the Son, and through the breathing of the Holy Ghost”³⁹⁰.

The water mentioned by the Holy Scripture³⁹¹, upon which the Holy Ghost “**moved**”, says Father Stăniloae, it wasn’t identical to the water after Genesis:

“(… it has in itself in a virtual manner the rationalities and the potentialities of the defined existence – images of the rationalities of the Logos – which will appear through the breathing of the Holy Ghost …) It was an indefinite energy, not lightened by any determination, but in a universal movement, not-solidified in any way, having in itself, through creation, the rationalities of all the existence forms, created and sustained according to the image of the rationalities of the creator and conservative Logos.”³⁹²

³⁸⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology), vol. III, p. 23.

³⁹⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology), vol. III, p. 23.

³⁹¹ Genesis 1: 2.

³⁹² Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology), vol. III, p. 23.

At Jordan River Christ is baptized, but Christ didn't need Baptism. He is Baptized for uniting again the Holy Ghost with the creation, and, consequently, with the water. The matter of the cosmos is, through the Savior's Baptism, united with the Ghost, so that the Baptism:

“(...) it has cosmic importance.”³⁹³ (...) The Baptism’s water (...) it is spiritualized now for the rebirth of the man, or for reestablishing the relation of the man with God.”³⁹⁴

Father Stăniloae shows that Baptism is an exchange of energies on a double way: an ascendant one, for the man through Baptism he ascends into Christ through enhypostasizing, and a descendent one, for through Baptism the energies of the Holy Ghost, which shine from Christ, they fill up the man with the Holy Ghost.

From the formula “Baptized be”, we deduce the fact that the Mystery is done visibly through the act of the priest, but also invisibly, through the work of Christ.

Baptism bring the death of the previous man and the resurrection to the true life, through rebirth, which lead to removing the ancestral sin and also to removing all the reproachable deeds committed previously to Baptism, by the one who is baptized. Baptism is a total renewal of the man. The man comes out from baptism as new-born in the communion with Christ.

Father Stăniloae warns us that, through Baptism, the human person doesn't lose his freedom, and he doesn't follow to be kept by force, by Christ, but:

“(...) he doesn't lose the freedom of separating himself from Him.”³⁹⁵

Although the man, after Baptism, is reborn to another life, and he is no longer the former man from before Baptism:

³⁹³ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 25.

³⁹⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 25.

³⁹⁵ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 25.

“(...) the paradox is that the baptized one remains, in the same time, the same subject. The Baptism doesn’t produce the birth of a man who didn’t previously exist, but the rebirth of the same one (...)”³⁹⁶

The Baptism has upon us the effect of reestablishing us in a state of beginning of the life into Christ:

“The main effect of the Baptism is the birth to a new life on earth.”³⁹⁷

Consequently to Baptism, we are asked to remain in a clean living, by working the virtues and the commandments. Father Stăniloae says about virtues that:

“Through virtues we offer ourselves, thus, continuously, as sacrifice to God, together with Christ.”³⁹⁸

Consequently to Baptism, the believer receives a new life, but if he doesn’t work the virtues and the commandments, this new life will be taken from him, the grace will hide itself in the ultimate deeps of the soul, existing there the possibility that the baptized man to descend in a worse state than he was before³⁹⁹. That’s why Father Stăniloae urges us to work the virtues, because the gift of the Baptism is, in the same time, also a duty. He quotes Saint Gregory of Nazianzus, who shows that: *“Who doesn’t keep and doesn’t develop the cleanliness received though Baptism, he becomes dwelling place of more*

³⁹⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 27.

³⁹⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 29.

³⁹⁸ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 29.

³⁹⁹ John 5: 14: ROB: “After this, Jesus found him in the temple and said him: Behold, you have been made healthy. From now on, sin no more, to not be it worse to you.”; KJB: “Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.”

*demons than before Baptism and he will be saved with big difficulty”*⁴⁰⁰.

The sin thickens the heart and the body of the sinner, making them opaque to the passing of the Holy Ghost, and deaf to the savior calling of Christ. Through sin, the human being descends into animality, because **without Christ we are savages**, no matter how much we would advance on the horizontal direction of the human knowledge.

Baptism, by washing up the sins, it brings to man again at the possibility of the intimate communion with Christ, through the work of the Holy Ghost, and thus the man:

*“In this relation with God, of calling and of answering, (the man, o. n.) enters (...) fully through Baptism. That’s why through Baptism, the man is given his name, which expresses the relation he is placed in, with God, realtion which he must honor and fulfill.”*⁴⁰¹

The passing of Christ into His new Kingdom, in the Church of the soul of the Baptized man, it takes place in the same time with the Mystery of the Baptism:

*“But since the Baptism, the man has received, in His form as person, the form of Christ, for he entered the relation with Him. (...) In this sense he has dressed himself in Christ, since Baptism. Christ has given him His countenance; and the man must do this countenance increasingly clear, by striving himself to live, increasingly more, in accordance with the example of Christ.”*⁴⁰²

Father Stăniloae shows that Baptism it is called by the Holy Fathers also as *illumination*, for through the Mystery of the Baptism, the human being who was sitting before “in

⁴⁰⁰ In Sanct. Bapt., P.G. cit., col. 405, 408.

⁴⁰¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (*The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*), vol. III, p. 34.

⁴⁰² Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (*The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*), vol. III, p. 34.

darkness and in the shadow of death”⁴⁰³ receives Christ within himself:

*“The man is lightened through Baptism, being penetrated by the light of the Word of God, Who, by being eternal, has given, through embodiment, the eternity, to the human nature - assumed and resurrected by Him – and to all the ones who receive Him through Baptism.”*⁴⁰⁴

Through Baptism the man assumes a great responsibility: that one of “rejecting Satan and all his things” and to give himself, willingly, as servant, to Christ.

After Baptism, the new member of the Church is imparted with the Most-Precious Body and with the Most-Holy Blood of the Lord, and then the priest takes him around the holy table, fact that symbolizes the introducing of the baptized one:

*“(...) in the highest mysteries of the knowledge of Christ, for him to be the preacher of the faith into Christ and the priest of his family, or the first to be held accountable for the faith and the living of the church from his house, the first to bring sacrifice and who sacrifices himself for his family’s church, as Christ is for His Church (...)”*⁴⁰⁵

The priest, or the hierarch, who officiate the Mystery of the Holy Baptism, they represent:

“(...) Christ working from within Church and within Church. The Baptism is worked in a seen mode by the priest, or by hierarch, but in a mysterious mode it is worked by Christ Himself, and that’s why: (...) the valid officiating of the Baptism doesn’t depend on the personal worthiness of the priest, if the Church still

⁴⁰³ Matthew 4: 16; Luke 1: 79.

⁴⁰⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 37.

⁴⁰⁵ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 39.

keeps him as Its servant. This is because he celebrates the Mysteries on behalf of the Church.”⁴⁰⁶

Not the man baptizes, but Christ Baptizes. Christ is the One Who receives us in His Church. If the unworthiness of the one who baptizes, it doesn't affect the Baptism, though, it will bring payment for his mistakes, upon him, for being a sinner.

In a fortuitous case, and in the absence of an ordained priest, on the basis of the general priesthood conferred through Baptism, any member of the Church can baptize:

“For the Baptism means the stretched forwards hands of the Church, that receives the ones who want to come at its bosom, escaping the waves of the eternal perdition, and these arms can take the concrete form of any limb of the Church.”⁴⁰⁷

The Church can validate the Baptism done outside it, or in other cults, by respecting the decisions of the synods take in this sense:

“(…) by extending over the external part done, the full of grace atmosphere of the Church (…)”⁴⁰⁸

Baptism means accepting the believer within the intimacy of the Church of Christ, but by being intimate to Christ, the believer becomes intimate to the Holy Trinity, for the Persons of the Holy Trinity are in a perichoretic relation. Likewise, **being baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, we become representatives of the Holy Trinity within world, and preachers of the right faith.**

Salvation as union and communion with Christ and with the Holy Trinity, it cannot take place without Baptism, because if we are not baptized, we do not reject the ancestral sin, neither the old man. We must be reborn through Baptism for

⁴⁰⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 39.

⁴⁰⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 39-40.

⁴⁰⁸ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 40.

being received by Christ within His Church, where we are united to Him, and through this, to the Holy Trinity.

Baptizing children it is necessary because they are born bearing the ancestral sin. And why to be they condemned, until a limit of age arbitrarily established by man, to bear upon themselves the sin and the work of satan? Why not to reject these, since the beginning? Witnesses for their faith are the godparents and the family of the children:

*“Baptism is an act through which the spiritual life of the family penetrates in them (in children, n. n.).”*⁴⁰⁹

And this penetration of the spiritual life, it means in the same time, a penetration of the faith. *“The possibility of the children to be imparted of Christ, on the basis of the faith of their close ones (...)”*⁴¹⁰ it gives the possibility of impartation with the Holy Mysteries, but here we must insist upon an aspect that seems to be less analyzed, namely the one of the children's impartation. Generally, the small children, not only the ones who are being baptized, but also the already baptized ones, they are imparted for they are considered without blemish, and without being asked to confess their sins. But we must see, in the affirmation of Father Stăniloae from above, that this impartation takes place on the basis of the family's faith, **a great responsibility which falls to us, to the family, for our cleanliness and for our faith, so that our small children to not be imparted, due to our mistakes, unworthily! Behold that their salvation is connected to our salvation, the communion of the family constituting in this sense a church of the family.**

III. 3. Mystery of the Anointment

Father Stăniloae shows that the Mystery of the Anointment and the Mystery of the Baptism form a whole with two distinct parts, so that one can tell the Mystery of the Anointment is a continuation of the Mystery of the Baptism.

⁴⁰⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 41.

⁴¹⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 42.

Due to this, there is no other introduction when celebrating this Mystery, but:

“(...) the priest reads in continuation a prayer through which he asks God to give to the newly lightened – through water and Ghost – person, also the seal of the Holy and Almighty Ghost.”⁴¹¹

The gifts received consequently to Baptism, even sealed with the seal of the Holy Ghost, they need to be protected by the receiver, through a continuous effort, of ascending the narrow way that leads to salvation.

Referring to Anointment, Father Stăniloae quotes the Orthodox theologian Al Schmemann: *“(...) Thus the Anointment is the personal Pentecost of the man, his entering the life of the Holy Ghost, namely in the true life of the Church. In this Mystery he is considered as full man. This is because belonging to the Kingdom of God, it mandatorily means to be whole and full man, in his maturity.”⁴¹²*

Father Stăniloae shows that:

*“About general priesthood received by the believers through the Mystery of the Anointment, Saint Makarios the Egyptian says: The people sanctified through Anointment become Christians, for being **emperors, priests, and prophets of the heavenly Mysterious.**”⁴¹³*

Once fulfilled the Mystery of the Anointment, the human being starts a continuous dialogue with the Holy Ghost, a dialogue which sustains the human persons in preserving the gifts received at Baptism, and in the continuous development, during life, of these gifts. The Holy Ghost descends continuously, as in a personal Pentecost, upon each believer who enters the Church.

⁴¹¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 43

⁴¹² Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 44; quote from *Aus der Freude Leben*, the translation in German language of the book: *Sacraments and Orthodoxy*, Walter-Verlag, Olten und Fr.I.Br. 1974, pp. 90-91.

⁴¹³ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 34; Quote from *Homilies* 16: 1.

Christ, as the Anointed of God, is, through the descent of the Holy Ghost, upon Him, after the Baptism done by John the Baptist at Jordan's water:

“(...) anointed (...) with the full Ghost.”⁴¹⁴

Through the Mystery of the Anointment, the heavens are opened to the human being, who is united to Christ:

“For there is no longer a border between the life of the creature united to Christ and the heavenly order of the Ghost.”⁴¹⁵

Anointment, as Mystery, it places us, at its turn, in intimate communion with the Holy Trinity.

Father Stăniloae shows us that:

“(...) The Ghost received in the Mystery of the Anointment is the communication bridge between us and the Father, communication eternally new and always increasing. This means the opened heavens and the quality of sons communicated to us by Him. He gives us through this the filial sensitiveness, of an increasing delicacy towards the Father, as the one of brotherhood into God, with our fellow humans.”⁴¹⁶

The Holy Ghost carries from the Father, shining from the Son, Their love upon human being; but also in the opposite direction, He brings our love – as welcomed sacrifice – before the Son and the Father.

The seen part of the Anointment is constituted by: the Holy and the Great Chrism, the act of anointing with it, and of uttering of the words: “The seal of the Holy Ghost”.

Chrism's soaking into body it foreshadows the believer's becoming transparent for God, the receiving of God in the intimacy of the one who believes. The fragrance of the Chrism

⁴¹⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 46.

⁴¹⁵ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 347.

⁴¹⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 51.

foreshadows the good fragrance of the one deified by working the commandments and the virtues, and the spreading of this fragrance within Church symbolizes the spreading of his good works within community and within world, namely the spreading of the Holy Ghost, Who is upon them.

The Anointment is:

“(...) strengthening to the baptized one, for developing the new life in a together-working of him with the Holy Ghost (...)”⁴¹⁷

And because of this, or in order to obtain this effect, are anointed to the baptized one, the main limbs of his body, to make him able to not work the sin with any of them, and to use all of them for fulfilling the commandments with the help of the Holy Ghost, for through these limbs to maintain himself in the permanent connection with God.

Father Stăniloae analyzes the meanings of the word “seal”, and he shows that this word has two main meanings: the one of “strengthening” and the one of “imprinting”. Through Anointment, the Holy Ghost strengthens us in our work, on the way of salvation, but He also Imprints Himself within us. The imprinting of the Ghost into believers accentuates, in a personal manner, their work, according to the diversity of their dispositions, inclinations, and individual powers, so that the Church’s believers receive from the Ghost special gifts, different from others’: **personal charismas**. But, for actualizing these charismas, for benefiting of their savior effect, the believers must engage themselves in the fight against themselves, and against the world, in the continuous effort of personal improving and development, in the Church’s laboratory. Baptism and Anointment, they open to the believer the way of salvation, but the believers aren’t mandatorily saved, but it is needed their personal effort. **God gives Himself to us, but we must strive ourselves to become able to receive Him.**

An aspect necessary to be mentioned here is that Anointment expresses the importance the Orthodox Church grants it to the body. The believers’ bodies, through

⁴¹⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology), vol. III, p. 51.

Anointment, but also through the believers' own efforts of advancing on the way of salvation, must become a "vessel of the filling up"⁴¹⁸ and "temple of the Holy Ghost"⁴¹⁹.

The Apostolic continuity, respectively the continuity in transmitting of the Holy Ghost by laying the hands, by the bishop, it is ensured within Orthodox Church, through the fact that the Holy and the Great Chrism is sanctified by the Episcopate of an autocephalous Church. In the same time, this is ensured also through the fact that:

*"The Holy Ghost communicated to each believer is the Ghost of the Church descended by the invocation of the entire episcopate (...)."*⁴²⁰

III. 4. Mystery of the Repentance (Confession)

Confessing the sins, and their forgiving by the spiritual guide, by doing the Mystery of the Confession, it brings the believers who follow to be imparted, in union with Christ, because by committing sins, he separates himself from the Savior.

The Savior Himself, by forgiving the sins to the ones whom He was healing, He instituted this mystery.

The power of forgiving the sins is given to His disciples by the Savior, before He ascends to heavens, by giving them the Holy Ghost (Jo. 20: 22-23; Mt. 18: 18). This power is being transmitted from Apostles to priests, in the frame of the Church, in a continuity that crosses the century without interruption. Father Stăniloae shows that the choosing of the one who receives within Church the power of forgiving the sins:

⁴¹⁸ I Thessalonians 4: 4: ROB: "For each of you to know to master his vessel in holiness and in honor.", KJB: "That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour;"

⁴¹⁹ I Corinthians 6: 19: ROB: "Or you do not know that your body is temple of the Holy Ghost Who is within you, Whom we have from God, and you do not belong to yourselves?"; KJB: "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?"

⁴²⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 53.

“(...) is (...) an act of the Holy Ghost, but also of the Church; or of the Ghost working through a visible act, done within Church, or by the Church.”⁴²¹

The Mystery of the Confession has three elements: the confession of the sins before the spiritual guide, the repentance of the believer for the confessed sins, and the forgiveness of these sins by the spiritual guide (by the priestly untying).

Confessing the sins realizes, and it is realized, in a state of maximum communion between the believer and the spiritual guide. Consequently to the confession of the sins, the spiritual guide communicates to the believers the means to fight in the future, in order to be healed, for no longer committing sins in the future.

The intimate communion between penitent and the spiritual guide takes place in the presence and in the communion with Christ, into the Holy Ghost. Both of them, priest and penitent, they must be convinced about this presence and work. The penitent, being helped by the Holy Ghost, he confesses to Christ, and the spiritual guide forgives the sins of the penitent, with the power given him by Christ, through the Holy Ghost, and also with this power he prescribes the actions for spiritual healing, so that the confessed sins to no longer be committed in the future.

The priest, who is spiritual guide, he must act with compassion and understanding, to recuperate and to regain for Christ, the soul of the penitent. The communication between is provided and facilitated and receives power for taking place, by and through Christ and the Holy Ghost.

Father Stăniloae says that:

“Through confession, the penitent makes the first act of raising himself above the sin, helped by the introductory prayers and by the urges of the priest, or also by his questions.”⁴²²

⁴²¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology), vol. III, p. 84.

⁴²² Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology), vol. III, p. 90.

The penances, respectively the deeds and the attitudes recommended by the spiritual guide to the penitent who has confessed his sins, are recommended by him in his triple quality as friend, judge, and medic. These penances aim to regain the sinner for the Church of Christ, and not to punish him. "I want mercy, and not sacrifice" ⁴²³ says the Savior. In this sense, Father Stăniloae shows very clearly that:

*"The Tradition of the Church doesn't know unforgivable sins."*⁴²⁴

Although the priest, who is spiritual guide, can forgive any sin, if he sees that the penitent doesn't have a true repentance, he can postpone him from Impartation, for a time he considers necessary, and after that, he can summon the penitent to another confession. While he has been postponed from Impartation, until the new confession, the penitent is requested to faithfully fulfill the received canon. In the Tradition of the Church there were established periods of repentance for diverse sins, but these periods have evolved. The spiritual guide must be sure, before giving absolution for somebody to be imparted, whether that believer belongs to the Orthodox Church. This is necessary because the Eucharist is an impartation in communion, an impartation of the entire Church; the Orthodox Church doesn't accept, to Impartation, believers belonging to other Churches.

The spiritual guide has the authority to adapt the penances to the concrete case of the penitent, but also to change them during the believer's execution of the canon, in cases when he sees the penitent having a special zeal, or when he sees him being in danger of dying not-imparted.

Father Stăniloae shows that the recommendations of the spiritual guide, given to the penitent, are efficient when the spiritual guide himself has a holy life that confers him the authority of prescribing the recommendations to the believer.

The absolution of the sins, as the third phase of the Mystery of the Repentance, it is composed of the prayer of the spiritual guide addressed to Christ, to forgive the penitent, and

⁴²³ Hosea 6: 6; Matthew 9: 13 and 12: 7.

⁴²⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology), vol. III, p. 91.

from the own absolution of sins given by the spiritual guide, who:

*“(...) through his prayer, as authorized representative of the Church (...) he officiates the Mystery”*⁴²⁵.

III. 5. Mystery of the Eucharist (Impartation)

The three Mysteries through which the believer is initiated, respectively he is introduced in the Church of Christ, as we have previously showed, are: the Mystery of the Baptism, the Mystery of the Anointment, and the Mystery of the Impartation. Father Stăniloae calls them as **“Initiation Mysteries”**⁴²⁶.

Through Eucharist the believer is fully united to Christ and to His Church.

The Eucharist, as Father Stăniloae shows, it is considered the Mystery that crowns the Baptism and the Anointment:

*“The Eucharist implies in itself the power of the full death of that previous existence separated from God, a death started through Baptism and developed through Anointment.”*⁴²⁷

In the Mystery of the Baptism, the former man dies, but in some measure we also die to ourselves, by surrendering ourselves to God. And God gives us the resurrection in the new life, through Eucharist, in which we resurrect together with Christ:

“The Eucharist isn’t so much for the renewed life on earth, according to the resemblance of the life of

⁴²⁵ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 95.

⁴²⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 54.

⁴²⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 54.

Christ on earth, but rather for the eternal life (...) and thus for being us elevated above the earthly life.”⁴²⁸

Behold how Father Stăniloae defined the Eucharist, in a very eloquent and illustrative manner:

“The Eucharist is the force of a magnet, that works in our earthly life, attracting it towards itself; it is the Polar Star that guides the ship of our life on the waves of the earthly existence; it is the ferment or the dough that transforms our earthly life, gradually, in the eternal life (...) The new life from earth wouldn’t have any power without the perspective and the earnest of the resurrection”⁴²⁹; “The Eucharist makes us to have within ourselves the Resurrection of Christ, as power that leads us towards resurrection and to foretaste it in a certain way.”⁴³⁰

But the Eucharist, as foretaste of the resurrection in the eternal life, it constitutes also a help for the believer when the end of the earthly life has come, for it helps him to receive the bodily death:

“(...) like Christ received it, as a gift offered to the Father, without any fear and doubt concerning our eternal existence.”⁴³¹

⁴²⁸ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 55.

⁴²⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 56.

⁴³⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 56.

⁴³¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 56. We notice here, as all over his works, that Father Stăniloae uses the *anaphora* as rhetoric means, reformulating the affirmed sentences and explaining them, so that the didactical objective of the understanding, by the reader, of the uttered idea, to be accomplished: “Thus the Eucharist gives us not only the power to die to the sin and to surrender ourselves to God, but also of receiving the real death when it will come, like Christ received it as a gift offered to the Father, without any fear and doubt concerning our eternal existence. It gives us the power to die when we should, not only in the resemblance of Christ’s death, but also in real mode, as Him, having working within ourselves the earnest of the eternal life we will pass to. United to Christ in Eucharist, we no longer fear death, but we bear within us the body of the resurrected Christ, as the cure or the medicine of the immortality, or of the eternal incorruptibility, as the Holy Fathers

The Last Supper is the moment when the Savior institutes the Mystery of the Eucharist, and Father Stăniloae singularizes this capital event from the “history” of the salvation, by describing it like this:

*“(...) The Last Supper is, in a main and own manner, the first Eucharist.”*⁴³²

At the Last Supper, the words of the Savior fore-imagine His death, and at Eucharist we are imparted by the mysterious death of Christ. Father Stăniloae shows that through Eucharist the human beings enters the intimate communion with God, dying to himself, but preserving his character of person, like the Persons of the Holy Trinity are in a perichoretic relation, but without confounding to each other:

*“(...) for the mysterious death, of sinking into God, accompanied by a happy feeling of merging into Him, which is not abolishment once this sentiment can be lived, it is sinking into the infinite life that God is, and, through this, the sipping of an immortal and plenary life, from His life. Only by mysteriously dying, our person is plenary realized, it is filled up with the endless and imperishable life.”*⁴³³

Repeated participation to Eucharist, in the perspective of our death to ourselves, and of giving our life to God, they appear as repeated deaths, and through each of these deaths:

“(...) we produce a discontinuity with our past state, launching us towards a new one, a superior one, according to the epektasis (stretching forwards) of

call the Eucharist”. In the three sentences, in other words, it is reformulated the same content.

⁴³² Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology), vol. III, p. 58.

⁴³³ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology), vol. III, p. 58.

Saint Apostle Paul (Philippians 3: 14) and of Saint Gregory of Nyssa”⁴³⁴.

Christ is the Life Itself, for He has the life in Himself, and for He overcame death through Resurrection, also the believers who receive Him through the Mystery of the Eucharist, they will be at their turn:

“(...) the reason why Eucharist imprints within us the state of resurrection, with which we will overcome death and we will cross through, it is our union in full degree with Christ, Who overcame death He cross through, and Who is in the mysterious consummate state of death (total surrender to the Father, o. n.) and resurrection.”⁴³⁵

Related to the same aspect Father Stăniloae shows that:

“In Eucharist, we eat His body, and we drink His blood, dead, resurrected, and spiritualized. By doing this, His body and His blood give, also to our blood and to our body their quality, so that our body and our blood bear within them, together with Christ, the mysterious death of God and the foretasting of the resurrection being worked within them.”⁴³⁶

Father Stăniloae warns us that, though we are imparted with the body and with the blood of the Savior:

“(...) the body and the blood of Christ, they remain His personal body and blood. But they are prolonged in our body and blood, so that these ones are integrated within His body and blood, by receiving their quality.”⁴³⁷

⁴³⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p.58.

⁴³⁵ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 59.

⁴³⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 59.

⁴³⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 59.

Through Eucharist the union with Christ is full, for it brings in the continuation of the union with Him, through the energy of the Holy Ghost, the union with the Most-Precious Body itself, and with His Most-Holy Blood itself. Our body becomes His body, and He becomes present within our body, coworker with us for our salvation.

This **perichoresis with Christ**, which we receive as a gift through Eucharist, it opens the way of a reciprocal sensing of the feelings and of the works of the man into Christ and of Christ within man:

*“Through these consummate intimacy and communication with Him, we live the moods, the feelings, and the works of Christ, and He lives ours ones, penetrated and qualified as His.”*⁴³⁸

Father Stăniloae calls the Eucharist as the “Mystery of the Church’s Unity”⁴³⁹. Christ, through Eucharist, He “prolongs” himself within us, so He prolongs within us His Church. But, being Him One within everybody, His Church prolonged through Eucharist is One, and the believers are united in His Church and in Him. But the Eucharist doesn’t unite only the earthly Church, but also the heavenly one, for at the celebration of the Mystery of the Eucharist it is evoked the entire Church: living believers, dead ones, angels, all of them having the Lord’s Mother, in front of them, as Defender.

The Eucharist is distinguished amongst the other Mysteries also by the real presence of Christ, of His Body and of His Blood; whilst at the celebration of the other Mysteries He is present, mysteriously, and through His work.

Salvation is not possible but within the laboratory of the Church, because the Eucharist cannot be officiated but within the Church of Christ; and the Mystery of the Eucharist is:

⁴³⁸ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (*The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*), vol. III, p. 60.

⁴³⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (*The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*), vol. III, p. 60.

“(...) the fulfillment of the oikonomia of the salvation, of the oikonomia of the love of God for people, and of His union with us.”⁴⁴⁰

Consequently, we cannot be united with God outside Eucharist, namely outside the Church.

Through Eucharist, Christ becomes a part of ours, but in the same time He remains above us, for He comes, again and again, with a bigger power, and to an increased intimacy; this is because on the measure of our spiritual increasing: “we increase His **interiority**”⁴⁴¹ within us.

Father Stăniloae considers Eucharist as: “natural consequence of the Baptism”⁴⁴², for the reborn ones, the dead and the resurrected ones, the dead to themselves by giving himself to God - they must be nourished by Him and from Him as source of the Life.

Christ, after His Ascent, He doesn’t isolate Himself in heavens, but He is present and working through the Holy Ghost within His Church, and therefore within the Holy Mysteries. About His real presence to the celebration of the Eucharist, Savior Christ Himself tells us, when He institutes the Mystery of the Eucharist, at the Last Supper⁴⁴³.

Father Stăniloae affirms that, at the basis of the Eucharist, in addition of being instituted by Christ Himself, it also stays His sacrifice on the Cross, and the wine that He will drink only “*(...) in the day when I will drink it, with you, into My Kingdom*” (Matthew 26: 29; Mark 14: 25), it will be a new wine, renewed through resurrection. Without the Sacrifice on the Cross and without Resurrection we wouldn’t have had Eucharist, and:

⁴⁴⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology), vol. III, p. 60.

⁴⁴¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology), vol. III, p. 60.

⁴⁴² Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology), vol. III, p. 60.

⁴⁴³ John 6: 56: ROB: “The One who eats My body and drinks My blood he remains into My and I into him.”; KJB: “He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.”

“Christ lives, during the Last Supper, anticipatively and mysteriously, His death on the Cross; but also the mysterious death from after.”⁴⁴⁴

For Crucifixion and for Resurrection, says Father Stăniloae, Christ needed a body, and therefore the Embodiment is another basis of the Eucharist.

Through Eucharist are actualized again and again, to the end of time, the Embodiment, the Crucifixion, and the Resurrection of the Savior; and through our participation within Church, to the celebration of the Mystery of the Eucharist, we are imparted with all these things, and the chance if offered us to ascend, through the mercy of God and through our own effort, towards the state of salvation which is possible in this world. Through the Impartation with the Body and with the Blood of Christ, we foretaste His Kingdom even while still being us in this world.

Father Stăniloae shows that Eucharist is fundamentally necessary for salvation. The real presence of the Savior at Eucharist is the condition of our salvation; without the real presence of the Savior we cannot speak about salvation, and the officiating of the Mysteries wouldn't have spiritual substance in this case, but it would only be some external and inefficient rituals:

“Christ is present in a real manner with His body and with His blood, sacrificed and resurrected in Eucharist, for only through these ones we can also die and resurrect together with Him; and only through these death and resurrection together with Christ, we become partakers to the eternal life. Without our salvation’s dependency on the together-dying and together-resurrecting with Christ, it wouldn’t be necessary the presence of the Lord within us, with His sacrificed and resurrected body, and therefore the Eucharist wouldn’t be necessary.”⁴⁴⁵

⁴⁴⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (*The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*), vol. III, p. 64.

⁴⁴⁵ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (*The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*), vol. III, p. 65.

Father Stăniloae shows us that the Savior committed the Eucharist twice, during His dwelling time on earth: once before His Resurrection, and once after His Resurrection, on the road to Emaus.

Christ institutes Eucharist for people, for their salvation:

*“The Lord doesn’t transform, at Eucharist, the bread and the wine, for Himself, but for imparting Himself to the believers (...)”*⁴⁴⁶

In the Mystery of the Eucharist there are also present the two moves characteristic to any mystery of the Church: a movement of believers' self-giving to God and a movement of Self-giving of God to the believers.

*“The aspect of Sacrifice and of Mystery, of the Eucharist, they are not separated (...)”*⁴⁴⁷; *“Even as Sacrifice it is a Mystery (...) and even the Mystery is a Sacrifice.”*⁴⁴⁸

By participating to Mysteries, we sacrifice ourselves to God, taking the power to sacrifice ourselves out of Christ's power of sacrifice:

*“Through all these, the Mysteries stay in a connection with the sacrifice of Christ. In all the Mysteries we receive the power to sacrifice ourselves, from the state of (permanent, o. n.) sacrifice of Christ.”*⁴⁴⁹

For in Eucharist Christ Himself gives us His resurrected Body and Blood:

⁴⁴⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 69.

⁴⁴⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 70.

⁴⁴⁸ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 70.

⁴⁴⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 71.

“(...) Eucharist is the culmination of all the other Mysteries.”⁴⁵⁰

For receiving the Eucharist, the believers ascend spiritually, by passing through Baptism, Anointment, and Repentance.

Father Stăniloae notices, with great acuity and power of spiritual understanding, when referring to the diminution of the Mysteries' importance in other Christian Churches, and consequently also within the life of the believers within those Churches, the fact that:

*“(...) a power **lacking the ascetic feature** it becomes a power of worldly character, a non spiritual character.”⁴⁵¹*

Through the sacrifice implied by Mysteries, the believers converge towards the harmonious communion with Christ God, through faith and cleanness. In opposition to this, there is the sin, about which Father Stăniloae affirms: “the contradiction is the expression of the sin”⁴⁵².

When we sacrifice ourselves to Christ, by participation to the celebration of the Mysteries, Christ, at His turn, He brings us as sacrifice before the Father; Father Stăniloae shows that, by being placed before Father, we are not dissolved, we do not lose our identity, because:

“Christ brings us as sacrifices not as some objects, but as persons (...).”⁴⁵³

Although by participating to the Holy Mysteries, we sacrifice ourselves, and we are sacrificed, as persons, as individualities, we do not participate to Mysteries in an

⁴⁵⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 71.

⁴⁵¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 71.

⁴⁵² Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 72.

⁴⁵³ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 72.

individualistic manner, but in communion with the entire body of the Church, namely together with all the believers:

*“That’s why the Eucharist is of the Church, of the community.”*⁴⁵⁴

By analyzing the stretching in time, as unfolding of ritual acts, Father Stăniloae shows that the officiating of the Eucharist doesn’t come to an end once the bread and the wine are transformed into the Body and into the Blood of the Savior, but only after the believers and imparted with them:

*“(...) only through the act of imparting the believers, the Eucharist as Mystery, it comes to an end, because only now is being fulfilled its purpose as sacrifice brought to the Father, but also for sanctifying the believers; only now is uttered the name of each believer, as in case of all Mysteries.”*⁴⁵⁵

Being the Eucharist celebrated only by a priest, or by a bishop, in the presence of the Synaxis (the assembly of the believers), it determines this Mystery to be received only within Church. Outside Church – considered as laboratory of salvation – the Eucharist cannot be officiated.

Orthodox believers are imparted only after they practiced a certain period of fasting, recommended by the priest who is their spiritual guide. This is because, by fasting, we show our “willingness towards sacrifice”⁴⁵⁶.

Concluding, we specify the fundamental fact that the priests and the bishops do not take by themselves the holy dignity and power, for celebrating the Eucharist, but they receive them, through the Mystery of the Ordination, from Christ Himself, as we are going to show in the followings.

⁴⁵⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 73.

⁴⁵⁵ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 77.

⁴⁵⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 77.

III. 6. Mystery of the Ordination

Christ gives Himself in an unseen way in Mysteries, but this Self-giving must be done also in a seen manner, through the mediation of some persons chosen and consecrated, by Himself, through the Mystery of the Ordination.

In the absence of the priest or of the bishop, the seen officiating of the Mysteries, through which Christ gives Himself to us, isn't possible.

Through priest and bishop, the believers - upon whom the Mysteries are committed - they "**are joined to the Church**"⁴⁵⁷. Father Stăniloae shows us that:

*"Ordination is by excellence the Mystery of the Church, besides the fact that is the Mystery that makes Christ to be lived⁴⁵⁸ through priests, as subject, by believers. Ordination is the condition of all the other Mysteries, though, without those ones, it cannot accomplish its purpose."*⁴⁵⁹

Christ, as Source of the priesthood, He brings the gift of the priesthood upon the ordained ones. Christ is the One Who ordains, in an unseen way, His priests:

*"This mission of full Priest, it has been given to Christ by God in Trinity, and Christ has also given it, to Himself, as God and not as man."*⁴⁶⁰

Christ uses the priests for keeping us in unity and efficiency, within His Church:

"The sanctification, or the ordination of those men, is just the act through which Christ, in an unseen way, he chooses and then announces them, as organs

⁴⁵⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (*The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*), vol. III, p. 97.

⁴⁵⁸ We are reiterating here our observation that, though Christ fully embodied Himself, on godlike scale, once and forever, He embodies Himself on the scale of the man with each officiated Mystery. Through the Mystery of the Ordination He embodies Himself within His priests.

⁴⁵⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (*The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*), vol. III, p. 98.

⁴⁶⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (*The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*), vol. III, p. 99.

through whom, when they will commit the sacramental acts, He will commit these sacramental acts Himself in an unseen way (...)"⁴⁶¹. "The priests aren't only seen images, but autonomous, of Christ as Priest, but they are seen organs of the His unseen Priesthood"⁴⁶². (...) The priests communicate the teaching of Christ and His gifts, but not theirs. But in the same time: "(...) they aren't passive instruments of Christ."⁴⁶³

For Christ to exercise His work upon believers, the priest who celebrates the Mysteries must be in a state of total transparency and communication with Him.

About bishops, Father Stăniloae shows that:

*"The bishop is the full representative of Christ, Who is the eternal and unifier Hierarch. Each bishop is the head of a local Church."*⁴⁶⁴

Father Stăniloae quotes Saint Cyprian (Epistle 66: 9), who says: "Without bishop the Church cannot exist"⁴⁶⁵.

Father Stăniloae affirms also the synodial character of the Church, manifested in the community of the bishops:

"The bishops are kept in the ghost of the humbleness also by the fact that no one is autonomous, or master of all bishops, but he is incorporated in the community of all bishops, for keeping together the teaching of Christ and the unitary liturgical and canonical rule of the Church (...)"⁴⁶⁶

⁴⁶¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology), vol. III, p. 100.

⁴⁶² Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology), vol. III, p. 100.

⁴⁶³ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology), vol. III, p. 101.

⁴⁶⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology), vol. III, p. 101.

⁴⁶⁵ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology), vol. III, p. 101.

⁴⁶⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology), vol. III, p. 102.

The Church has been founded from the top down, from Christ, through Apostles, and to believers. The Mystery of the Ordination is instituted through the Embodiment of Christ, the choosing of the twelve Apostles and their sending to preach the Gospel of Christ, and through Pentecost. The Apostles, by laying their hands, they ordained bishops, priests, and deacons, and the Church attributes a special gift to each of these three stairs.

Within Orthodox Church, naming the priests with the term of sacerdot is avoided, because these ones mustn't be separated from people, and they owe to bring sacrifice of praise, together with the Church's believers. And the believer in general, is considered as:

“(...) imperial priest, taking power from the sacrifice brought by the ministrant priest at Liturgy (...)”⁴⁶⁷

The Apostolic succession it means transmitting the same grace and the same teaching from Apostles to bishops, and in continuation, from bishops to priests. Using a very suggestive comparison, Father Stăniloae expresses the apostolic succession as being:

“(...) the same sap, who is Christ, extends Himself through bishops and priests in the whole tree of the Church, being in an unmediated manner in each of Church's limbs.”⁴⁶⁸

In the same time:

“Through the episcopate's apostolic succession it is ensured the integral preservation of the apostolic teaching, namely not only in its form fixed in the New Testament, but also in its explicit form, named: the Holy Tradition. This one has been preserved through

⁴⁶⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology), vol. III, p. 108.

⁴⁶⁸ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology), vol. III, p. 110.

its apostolic succession in its spoken and applied form.”⁴⁶⁹

A special role falls to Bishops, as being the ones who have received from the Lord the ten talents of the grace. Father Stăniloae says about this:

“Episcopal charisma is the charisma bearing in itself all the graces and the gifts disseminated starting with the Apostles, all the time, within Church, or Christ and His Holy Ghost, present and working within these gifts and charisms.”⁴⁷⁰

III. 7. Mystery of the Wedding (of the Marriage)

Referring to the Mystery of the Wedding, Father Stăniloae, paraphrasing H. Andrutsos and P. Evdokimov, he synthesizes the followings:

“The Mystery of the Wedding is a holy act, of godlike origin, during which through the priest, the grace of the Holy Ghost is imparted to a man and to a woman, who freely unite themselves into marriage, the grace sanctifying and elevating the natural bond of the marriage to the dignity of representing the union between Christ and the Church.”⁴⁷¹

Concerning the order of listing the Mysteries, Father Stăniloae says that:

“(….) through the first four Mysteries, the man is placed in a direct relation with Christ, and only indirectly he is placed in a relation of ministration with the other people, whilst, through the Mystery of the Wedding, the man is placed, firstly, in a tight relation with one of his fellow humans, and through

⁴⁶⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 111.

⁴⁷⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 111.

⁴⁷¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 119.

Anointment it is given to the man a help for his body, and only through these two Mysteries the man is placed in a direct relation with Christ. So that, this would justify also the placing of the Ordination after the first four Mysteries which place the man in a direct relation with Christ, for on these ones depend the salvation of the man, and the main role of the priest is that of helping the human beings to achieve their salvation.”⁴⁷²

Also, after referring to the order of the Holy Mysteries, Father Stăniloae adds this:

“(...) the four Mysteries placed before Ordination, give the man the grace, and the man, by collaborating with the grace, he achieves his salvation, but the fructifying of this gift is fully done through priesthood and marriage.”⁴⁷³

In the frame of the marriage, the Christian believer can work all virtues. Marriage implies a communion between the two husbands, but also between these one and their fellow humans, who come in contact with them by kinship, or in society, consequently to the marriage.

“Wedding, as also the Priesthood, they make obvious the fact that person is not realized but in communion, that person and the communion are two indispensable poles; they make obvious the fact that Mysteries have their fructifying within the responsibility of the people for one another.”⁴⁷⁴

The husbands see Christ in each other. Father Stăniloae shows, referring to the fact that officiating and receiving the Holy Mysteries are expressions of the living into community, that:

⁴⁷² Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 119.

⁴⁷³ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 119.

⁴⁷⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 120.

*“The fact that we are able to see God through another human, that the love for another makes that one transparent to God, it is a gift of the Embodiment of the Word”*⁴⁷⁵; “(...) the man wouldn’t have been the image of God if he had been a closed monad”; “The man is a complete unity, and therefore he is image of God, for his unity, as man, is realized in the personal, not-uniform, and complementary duality, of man and woman (...)” and that: “The man is bipolar in himself. Only on this way he is a dialogical being.”⁴⁷⁶

Father Stăniloae considers the bodily difference between man and woman, though doesn’t affect the human quality, it determines the humanity to be lived by man and woman in a complementary manner to each other. That’s why: “*The human being is a conjugal being*” (quotes here from Evdokimov).

Marriage is perfect when the love between husbands is perfect, and this makes the unity of the marriage to be indissoluble.

Through the Mystery of the Wedding, the union between two husbands is done into Holy Ghost and into Christ, and that’s why the seal of the Holy Ghost, once laid on this union, it is **a seal of eternity**. Even if after resurrection, the two husbands won’t be like they are on earth, they will recognize each other and they will bear into eternity the fact that they were husbands on earth.

Father Stăniloae illustriously describes the marriage, like this:

“Marriage is in the same time love and help, enjoying the other one and having patience with him. Because of this, are given the godlike grace the ones who marry. Love unites the amazement in front of the mystery of the other one, and the bearing of his

⁴⁷⁵ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (*The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*), vol. III, p. 120.

⁴⁷⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (*The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*), vol. III, p. 121.

helplessness, and helping him in this one. In love, both of them become strong.”⁴⁷⁷

Although marriage has been weakened through the many forms of falling, it still hasn't been abolished yet, for it corresponds to the human nature, as it has been built by God; and the human nature still subsists.

Father Stăniloae analyzes the character of person, of each husband, as unique and unrepeatable character, for the person is unique and unrepeatable. But:

“(…) the two persons, by living together, they configure themselves one according to another, so that the man is completed through the woman as person, and vice versa. Each one becomes a co-person and both of them a co-personal unity. That's why the man who would pass from a woman to another, he no longer realizes himself as person defined by the living with a sole person as woman. His features will become fluid, undefined.”⁴⁷⁸

Each divorce and each new marriage make the power of unity, the power of communion, of the two husbands, to decrease, and the grace hides within their souls increasingly far.

By participating to the wedding from Canaan, and through the wonder of transforming the water in wine, our Lord Jesus Christ:

“(…) wants to show that it commences the elevation of the human life in the order of the grace, from strengthening and elevating the marriage”.⁴⁷⁹

Father Stăniloae shows that:

⁴⁷⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 123.

⁴⁷⁸ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 123.

⁴⁷⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 124.

“Jesus consider adulterer the one who leaves his woman and take another one, or the one who takes the forsaken woman, because He reckons that the tie of the marriage hasn’t been abolished between the one who has forsake his wife, by the fact that he has forsaken her.”⁴⁸⁰ ⁴⁸¹

The Orthodox Church accepts to officiate the Mystery of the Wedding, for the same person, for a maximum of three times, but even from the second wedding it requests repentance and forbidding from the Holy Impartation, for two years; from the third wedding, the forbidding from the Holy Impartation is for five years. Only in case of one husband died, the other one is admitted to a new wedding without the churchly divorce, because the Church considers the first marriage extinguished through decease. **We personally consider that the husbands, even if by the deceit from satan, they are no longer able to see as possible the continuation of their marriage, they still must live together, as brother and sister, and by no mean to divorce**, for what seems today as impossible to be solved, or as impassable, tomorrow it will lose its importance. Through confession, canon, and advice, given by the spiritual guide - and by working the virtues - the causes which would have led otherwise to divorce, with the help of the God Lord, they will vanish away. And **in case of decease, the survivor husband is better not to marry again but to live in cleanness.**

Father Stăniloae highlights that:

“(...) this indissoluble unity, composed by man and woman, being a unity in the human plan, it is not so much an organic, physiological unity, but a unity through love. It is based on the love between the two human existences which complete each other not only

⁴⁸⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology), vol. III, p. 124.

⁴⁸¹ Matthew 19: 6: ROB: “So that they are no longer two, but one body. Therefore, what God united, let the man not separate.”; KJB: “Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”

on the bodily plan, but also in the spiritual one. For this it receives, within Church, a grace.”⁴⁸²

Behold how emotionally, describes Father Stăniloae, the life in marriage:

“Each of the two ones inscribes in his being increasingly more signs of attention, of understanding, of serving, and of sacrifice, from the part of the other one, and these ones tie them increasingly tightly, and make them to know and to cherish each other increasingly more, and this living spiritual harmony, that elevated each one of the two, as person, elevating one through another, makes their acts of bodily love to be penetrated by even more spirituality and familiarity”⁴⁸³; “Each one’s body becomes to the other one a transparent of his spirituality; it receives an increasing spiritual depth, it becomes a place of his spirit; each of them becomes a mystery, increasingly known and, in the same time, increasingly undefined. And this mystery of each one it is fully proven only to the other one, it is realized through him and for him. The mystery of each of them is combined with the mystery of the other one in a unique mystery. Thus, the marriage becomes a mystery of the duality or of the dual unity, which starts to be felt and to be realized since the moment of uniting the two ones in marriage, or even from before, but it actualizes its virtualities during their whole life, without becoming bored of one another.”⁴⁸⁴

The responsibility for the other one, and the love for the other one, they are the pillars on which the continuous spiritualizing of the marriage is being built. The love for the other:

⁴⁸² Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 124.

⁴⁸³ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 124.

⁴⁸⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 125.

“(...) it is the engine of endless acts of responsibility for that person.”⁴⁸⁵

Father Stăniloae sees the role of the marriage not only at the scale of the family, but in the frame of the entire Church. The family – the small church – it is a vital organ for the great family of the believers, for the Church of Christ. The sacrificial attitude for husband educates and sustains the sacrificial attitude for the fellow human in general, and the example of sacrifice of the husbands for each other it gives an impulse to the sacrificial attitude of the believers for each other.

A virtuous marriage strengthens the faith of the others in the reality and in the power of the Mysteries. A Christian marriage makes seen the work and the presence of Christ and of the Holy Ghost within world. If we are too sinful to receive Christ and the Holy Ghost, though we still can see as other have received Them.

Marriage is not a Mystery outside Christ, or outside His Church. The formal, legal marriage, it has a social value, but it hasn't holy finality outside Christ and outside His Church.

“(...) The Mystery of the indissoluble union between a man and a woman, as union which is being spiritualized in an increasingly deep union, it is Mystery into Christ.”⁴⁸⁶

Father Stăniloae brilliantly adds that the husbands have **“the humanity reached at the supreme intimacy”⁴⁸⁷** with the other one, and that:

“(...) each of the two husbands accomplishes the state he craves for, and he accomplishes himself, as persons, in reciprocal communion. But he accomplishes himself only when the bodily love is

⁴⁸⁵ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 126.

⁴⁸⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 127.

⁴⁸⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 127.

penetrated by the spiritual one and overwhelmed by it.”⁴⁸⁸

Through their spiritualizing in the communion of the Holy Mystery of the Marriage into Christ, the two husbands receive spiritual depths one for another.

Father Stăniloae shows that the Orthodox Church goes on the Imperial Way in considering the marriage both from bodily perspective and from spiritual perspective, as being pleasant to God and opened to the salvation of the husbands and of the children:

“(...) Christendom remains, though, realistic. It doesn’t despise the need of bodily union between man and woman. Wedding prayers do not avoid at all speaking about it. But it reckons that only in marriage it becomes a means of complete spiritual union, or it deepens this union increasingly more. Therefore, by approving the marriage for satisfying the need of union between man and woman, it considers this union, in the same time, as means of promoting the spiritual union.”⁴⁸⁹ ⁴⁹⁰

We dare to affirm, in accord with Father Stăniloae, that the attitude of some of the Church’s Fathers to consider the body as enemy of our salvation, it is a wrong one, for they condemn the Creation of God. God build man and woman and placed within them beauty and sexual impulse, but He requests those to be consumed within the holy frame of the Marriage and of the Family. **Sexual impulse constitutes a rationality of God within human beings**, but which, as any

⁴⁸⁸ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology), vol. III, p. 127.

⁴⁸⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology), vol. III, p. 128.

⁴⁹⁰ Our Lord Jesus Christ shows about the bodily cleanliness, about virginity: „For there are eunuchs who are born so from their mother’s womb; there are eunuchs made so by men, and there are eunuchs who made themselves so, for the Kingdom of Heavens. Let him, who can understand, to understand.” (Matei 19: 12). In KJB we have: “For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother’s womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.”

rationality from any created thing, it is perverted by man, by working the sins, when it gets out of its natural and spiritual frame.

Father Stăniloae shows that there aren't but two savior attitudes towards sexuality:

*“(...) or a total restraint of it, outside marriage, or satisfying it, as means of spiritual communion, and for advancing in this communion.”*⁴⁹¹

In the same time we mention the idea that the Orthodox Church advises the husbands: *“to make as many children as they want, and then to live as brother and sister”*.

Advancing of the way of spiritualizing the marriage takes also place by giving birth to children. The responsibility of the marriage, the responsibility of the husbands for one another, it is completed by their responsibility for the children born out of their marriage. Father Stăniloae speaks about: *“(...) assuming the responsibility of giving birth to children”*⁴⁹² as exceeding of the tie formed between husbands in their first stage of marriage, through the bodily union. His holiness paraphrases Saint John Chrysostom, showing that: *“when giving birth to children is intentionally avoided, the connection between husbands falls in a simple occasion of satisfying the bodily lust, which passes, thus, to sinful acts”*⁴⁹³.

By giving birth to children, we observe the commandment of God: *“And God blessed them, saying: Grow and multiply and fill up the earth and subdue it; and reign over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the sky, over all animals, over all living creatures which move on earth and over the whole earth!”* (Genesis 1: 28)⁴⁹⁴. Giving birth to children it multiplies the Church of Christ, and adds souls to the Kingdom of God.

Father Stăniloae shows that the responsibility of the family and of the children born within it:

⁴⁹¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology), vol. III, p. 128.

⁴⁹² Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology), vol. III, p. 128.

⁴⁹³ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology), vol. III, p. 130.

⁴⁹⁴ In KJB we have: “And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

“(...) it means a heavy cross. That’s why, at the religious service of the Wedding, it is song a hymn dedicated to the martyrs.”⁴⁹⁵

The one who officiates the Mystery of the Wedding is the priest, and through him, Christ Himself is present and blesses the wedding. Christ and His Holy Ghost seal the marriage consented by husbands, and They maintains them through this: *“united in Him”*.⁴⁹⁶

Father Stăniloae clearly shows that the receivers of the Mystery of the Wedding are a man and a woman, unmarried at the moment of the Wedding, no one of them was married before more than three times and not being relatives in more than grade five. Wedding cannot take place after priests’ and deacons’ ordination, and hierarchs cannot be but unmarried, or widows, or if their wife has retired in monasticism.

Father Stăniloae shows that through the Mystery of the Weeding:

“(...) bodily union between a man and a woman becomes, from an act of sinful concupiscence, as it is outside marriage, an act wanted by God and blessed by Him.”⁴⁹⁷

In the laboratory of the Church, marriage is savior to the husbands, by being sealed in eternity with the seal of the Godhead, and through the grace given to them. But working the virtues within marriage is necessary for salvation, for on earth the state of spiritualizing isn’t forever, and even pillars of the Church fall sometimes, because of carelessness.

III. 8. Mystery of the (Extreme) Unction

Mystery of the Extreme Unction is very important to the Orthodox Church. Father Stăniloae shows that:

⁴⁹⁵ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 131.

⁴⁹⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 131.

⁴⁹⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 133.

“In the Mystery of the Extreme Unction is imparted, to the believer who is ill, in an unseen way, the grace of healing or of appeasing the bodily pains, of strengthening the soul and of forgiving the sins remained after confession, by being him anointed with sanctified oil, accompanied by the prayers of the priests.”⁴⁹⁸

The Apostolic lineage of the Mystery of the Extreme Unction is attested by the Epistle of Saint James⁴⁹⁹.

Father Stăniloae accentuates the aspect referring to the fact that, through the Extreme Unction, the sick person is forgiven of: **“some sins he couldn’t confess”**⁵⁰⁰ and thus the sick person **won’t die without forgiveness of the sins he hasn’t confessed.**

In the Mystery of the Extreme Unction, God is the doctor, full of mercy on His patient.

Father Stăniloae shows that the Mystery of the Extreme Unction:

“(...) is by excellence, Mystery of the body, or the Mystery consecrated for healing the body. Through it, it is highlighted the positive value granted by God to the human body, as One Who Himself took body, and keeps His body forever, and He saves us through It, by imparting us with the godlike life.”⁵⁰¹

We dare to not totally agree the first part of the affirmation from above, for we believe the Mystery of the

⁴⁹⁸ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 136.

⁴⁹⁹ James: 5, 14-15: ROB: “Is there someone ill amongst you, let his call the Church’s priests to pray for him, anointing him with oil, in the name of the Lord. // And the prayer of the faith will save the ill one and it will elevate him at the Lord, and if he would have done sins, these sins will be forgiven to him.”; KJB: “Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: // And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.”

⁵⁰⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 137.

⁵⁰¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p. 137.

Extreme Unction equally addresses the body and the soul, and the illness resulted consequently to the sin, is both bodily and spiritual in the same time. Maybe there would be more comprising to call the Mystery of the Extreme Unction as the Mystery of healing, in the same time bodily and spiritually, of the ill ones. This is because it is impossible to make a separation between body and soul, as our Savior was in the same time man according to the body and God according to Godhead, and through His coming into world, he healed the sick ones, bodily and spiritually, but forgiving first their sins. Even more, forgiving the sins, cleaning the sins from the spiritual plan of a person, it is what precedes the bodily healing⁵⁰².

In fact, Father Stăniloae reviews⁵⁰³ his affirmation that “the Mystery of the Extreme Unction is by excellence a Mystery of the body”, and he shows that:

It is impossible to separate between body and soul, whilst the man is still living, namely between the work of the grace upon the body and upon the soul. The healing itself is felt by a sick person as a gift given him as integral person. The body is full of the energies of the soul; through it the soul works - without it the soul cannot work. That's why the grace doesn't work upon the body without working upon the soul. Upon the soul works, though, by strengthening it, and by cleaning it from sins, and by appeasing the conscience through this, thing that has a strengthening effect also upon the body, to make the body an instrument of the good work of the soul, and to strengthen the soul⁵⁰⁴; and: “(...) in the prayers of the Mystery are asked for, together: the healing of the body, and the forgiving of the sins, and the cleaning of the soul of sins.”⁵⁰⁵

⁵⁰² Mark 2: 5; Luke 5: 20.

⁵⁰³ This rhetorical figure of speech, of retracting, or of reformulating what has been said before, with the purpose of correcting the affirmation (called *epanorthosis*) is a preferred trope to the ones who walk the way of dialogical knowledge.

⁵⁰⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (*The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*), vol. III, p 138.

⁵⁰⁵ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (*The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*), vol. III, p 138.

Referring to the affirmation that through the Mystery of the Extreme Unction, the sick person is forgiven of sins which “he couldn’t confess”, Father Stăniloae explains that this formula doesn’t refer, by all means, to the sins the sick person has intentionally hidden to his spiritual guide, but to the following aspect:

*“Previous confession has brought, to the sick person, the forgiveness of the confessed sins, but he didn’t have time to melt down, by co-working with the grace achieved back, the sinful weaknesses, nourished through a long habituation to the sin, weaknesses which often explains also the sickness of his body. Or, maybe, the sick person couldn’t describe in a corresponding manner these weaknesses, which are often blurred in the mist of the indefinite.”*⁵⁰⁶

We would prefer in the quote from above the term “re-actualized grace”, for, as Father Stăniloae shows in his work *Jesus Christ or the Man’s Restoration*, the grace received at Baptism doesn’t ever disappear, but only “hides” in the depths of the soul, increasingly far, on the measure the man commits sins, and by working the virtues and the commandments, the grace shines again, within and from man, increasingly stronger, on the measure the man becomes increasingly transparent to the grace. Losing the grace consequently to the deceit of the evil one, would be equal to a victory of the evil one against God, by annulling the Mystery of the Baptism, what, even since the beginning, must not even be thought ever as possible⁵⁰⁷.

Father Stăniloae shows that the man, composed of body and soul, is submitted to the action of the material and of the immaterial forces, of the seen and of the intelligible ones, and between these forces there cannot be, though, a separation. That’s why through the Extreme Unction:

⁵⁰⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (*The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*), vol. III, p 138.

⁵⁰⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Iisus Hristos sau restaurarea omului* (*Jesus Christ or the Man’s Restoration*), Omnis cop Publishing House, Craiova, 1993, p. 393, footnote: “Where the grace is, there Christ is, as source of the grace. The Church is the repository of the grace, as one that is into Christ, or it has Christ as deep ground of its entire being and power.”

*“(...) the senses are cleaned up, and sanctified, and strengthened in themselves against temptations which come from the outside things and from the unseen evil forces, through their mediation.”*⁵⁰⁸

The Extreme Unction is officiated and is received for the cleanliness of the life from here, and for achieving the life to come:

*“The Mystery of the Extreme Unction (within Orthodox Church, o. n.), isn’t for death (...) but for a life in health and cleanliness.”*⁵⁰⁹

As during entire pilgrimage of the man through life, towards salvation, also in the case of the Extreme Unction, the more the sick person believes and repents, the more efficient is the healing brought through the Mystery, for the sick person has a wider opening towards receiving the Extreme Unction and, in essence, towards receiving salvation from God. Being a Mystery officiated in case the believers are sick, the priest takes heed to the circumstances the sick persons are in, and through oikonomia, he must be condescend, for having more motives to administrate the Mystery, than not to. So that the assurances referring to the fact that the sick persons are prepared for receiving the Mystery, must be treated with great understanding. In this sense Father Stăniloae shows that:

“The fact itself that the sick person calls the priests to pray for him it implies his faith in the work of God through this Mystery. (...) He realizes his helplessness as man and of the man in general, and he supremely trusts God. God has become more transparent to him through the weakness of his body. That’s why the priest is based also on the faith

⁵⁰⁸ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology), vol. III, p. 138.

⁵⁰⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology), vol. III, p. 139.

and on the repentance of the sick one, when asking from God His healing and purifying grace.”⁵¹⁰

By unction with sanctified oil, in the sign of the cross, of the main senses, the Sacrificed Christ Himself comes and dwells, through the sign of the cross, within the ill one, giving him the power of restraining from sins, of resisting any egotism of the sinful impulses; with this power the soul will be strengthened for being able to overcome the sickness of the body. The cross is the means through which it comes the power from the body of Christ, Who has defeated death.

Father Stăniloae highlights again the character of communion of all the savior acts of the Church, for the Mystery is officiated by several priests and:

“Against the action of the unseen forces is asked for the help of the saints, of the martyrs, and of the Lord’s Mother. (...) Extreme Unction is officiated, usually, in the presence of several believers, who pray concomitantly with the priests. From this large communion, from this sign of love given by several fellow humans, to him who is sick and helpless, the sick one receives power of bodily and spiritually healing. (...) As in all Mysteries, so also in this one, the communion with the priest and with other fellow humans, it helps us enter the communion with Christ.”⁵¹¹

Mystery of the Extreme Unction, officiated within the laboratory of the Church, it is savior; for what else does salvation mean, if not healing of sins, renouncing to them, and physical and spiritual healing, and remaining in the all-good love of Doctor Christ?

⁵¹⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p 139.

⁵¹¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. III, p 140.

IV. CULT OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH – WORK OF BELIEVERS’ SALVATION

IV. 1. Cult of the Orthodox Church, environment of the work of the Holy Ghost upon believers⁵¹²

In the *Dictionary of Orthodox Theology*, when explaining the term *Christendom*, Father Ion Bria shows that: “(...) *Christendom doesn't consist only in confessing a revealed faith, also called Creed, but also in celebrating this faith through acts of adoration*”⁵¹³. “*The Cult or the Worshipping must be done in «Truth and Faith»*”^{514 515}.

Father Ion Bria shows that:

*“The expression «into Ghost» might mean, here, the context of personal encountering the living God, or, in the presence and in the community of the Holy Ghost, given to Christians just for training them in serving God.”*⁵¹⁶

The more plenary and obvious manifestation of the cult, are the religious services officiated in the frame of the Church, religious services having as basis the faith and the certitude that Christ is permanently present within Church, and He works through the grace of the Holy Ghost. Father Ion Bria also says about the cult that:

“The Church brings the Liturgical cult in dependency on Christ and in union with Him; of course by priest's mediation. Besides, the priest expresses the liturgical

⁵¹² Title taken from Dumitru Stăniloae, „Cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe, mediul al lucrării Sfântului Duh asupra credincioșilor” (“The Cult of the Orthodox Church, Environment of the Word of the Holy Ghost upon Believers”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 1/1981.

⁵¹³ Ion Bria, *Dicționar de teologie ortodoxă (Dictionary of Orthodox Theology)*, Publishing House of the Biblical and Missionary Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 1994, p. 115.

⁵¹⁴ Ion Bria, *Dicționar de teologie ortodoxă (Dictionary of Orthodox Theology)*... p. 115.

⁵¹⁵ Ioan 4: 23-24: ROB: “But the time comes, and now it is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in ghost and truth, for the Father also wants such worshipers. // God is Ghost, and the one who worship Him must worship Him in ghost and truth.”; KJB: “But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. // God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”

⁵¹⁶ Ion Bria, *Dicționar de teologie ortodoxă (Dictionary of Orthodox Theology)*... p. 115.

*prayers at plural, on behalf of the believers, who form the Church.”*⁵¹⁷

The cult is leaded and guided by bishops and priests. Father Ion Bria uses the same formula as Father Stăniloae when he speaks about the role of the priests and their position related to Christ. They aren't by any means locum tenens of the Word of God, but:

*“The bishop, and also the priest, they are the seen servants of the priesthood of Christ.”*⁵¹⁸

In the same time, when defining the characteristics of the cult within Orthodox Church - defining illustriously done by Father Ion Bria - there is also present and highlighted the necessity of communion as support of the cult:

*“The cult starts from the principle that the liturgy and the Mysteries are celebrated in the name and in the presence of a community, even if the members of that community do not participate to all its diverse manifestations.”*⁵¹⁹

Father Stăniloae, when speaking about the cult of the Orthodox Church, he shows that this one, in its entirety, it has the Holy Liturgy as central place. His holiness shows that in the frame of this religious service:

*“(...) it is done, through the work of the Holy Ghost, the transformation of the bread and of the wine, and the believers are imparted by the Holy Ghost Himself, Who is dwelling in the Eucharistic body of the Lord, as in a dwelling place, or as in a church.”*⁵²⁰

In the prayers the priest utters when celebrating the Liturgy, he shows that the epiclesis takes place:

⁵¹⁷ Ion Bria, *Dicționar de teologie ortodoxă...* p. 117.

⁵¹⁸ Ion Bria, *Dicționar de teologie ortodoxă...* p. 117.

⁵¹⁹ Ion Bria, *Dicționar de teologie ortodoxă...* pp. 117-118.

⁵²⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe, mediul al lucrării Sfântului Duh asupra credincioșilor”, (“The Cult of the Orthodox Church, Environment of the Word of the Holy Ghost upon Believers”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 1 / 1981, p. 5.

“(...) for (the body and the wine which have been transformed through the work of the Holy Ghost, o. n.) being them, to the ones who will be imparted, towards awakening of the soul, towards forgiving their sins, and towards the impartation with Your Holy Ghost.”⁵²¹

Behold therefore, that **the purpose of the cult is not a theoretical one**, it isn't a social-cultural manifestation, **but it is a very concrete one**, of being imparted, after confessing the sins and after being forgiven, with the Body and the Blood of the Savior, with the Holy Ghost, towards salvation. That's why, the Church's cult, it is the work through which the Church is laboratory of believers' salvation.

We believe that, believers' passing from participating, as spectators, to the cult of the Church, to participating as limbs of the Church, who feel flowing through their veins the blood of the Head of the Church, it takes place when the acts and the deeds of the faith become “real”, namely when these acts and deeds “are embodied” to the believers. The believers no longer tell tales, theoretically, about Christ, but they eat, they drink, and they live Christ.

Celebrating the Holy Mysteries comes to complete the work of the Church manifested when celebrating the Holy Liturgy, for these consecrating, preparatory, and aiding Mysteries, are means through which, within Church and through Church, the believers are saved.

Father Stăniloae shows that another element of the Church's cult is:

“(...) some religious services, as for instance: sanctifying the small and the great water, burial, sanctifying the building of the church, the icons, the other churchly objects, and then sanctifying the churchly vestments, and of some food used by believers, for all of these ones to be dressed up in

⁵²¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, ”Cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe, mediul al lucrării Sfântului Duh asupra credincioșilor”, (“The Cult of the Orthodox Church, Environment of the Word of the Holy Ghost upon Believers”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, p. 5.

diverse gifts of the Holy Ghost and through them also the ones who touch them or use them (...)⁵²²

Another category composing the cult of the church, are:

“(...) the numerous blessings, directed by God through the priest, towards the believers themselves, all of the blessings being accompanied by the sign of the cross done by the priest, with the cross, or with his hand, upon believers.”⁵²³

Also, another category composing the Church's cult is formed by:

“(...) the seven Praises, within which the believers also encounter the work of the Holy Ghost.”⁵²⁴

Father Stăniloae draws the conclusion that:

“Generally, one can say that within the entire cult of the Orthodox Church, are overflowing as a rain, the gifts of the Holy Ghost upon the present believers who are in state of prayer.”⁵²⁵

Considering the Church in the totality of its attributes, respectively as being: One, Holy, Synodial, and Apostolic, fighting on earth and victorious in heavens, we dare to add to the component of the cult enumerated above, the relentless doxologies brought to God by the Holy Angels, and by the Saints who are dwelling the tents of the righteous.

⁵²² Dumitru Stăniloae, „Cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe, mediul al lucrării Sfântului Duh asupra credincioșilor”, (“The Cult of the Orthodox Church, Environment of the Word of the Holy Ghost upon Believers”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, p. 5.

⁵²³ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe, mediul al lucrării Sfântului Duh asupra credincioșilor” (“The Cult of the Orthodox Church, Environment of the Word of the Holy Ghost upon Believers”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*... p. 5.

⁵²⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe, mediul al lucrării Sfântului Duh asupra credincioșilor” (“The Cult of the Orthodox Church, Environment of the Word of the Holy Ghost upon Believers”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*... p. 5.

⁵²⁵ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe, mediul al lucrării Sfântului Duh asupra credincioșilor” (“The Cult of the Orthodox Church, Environment of the Word of the Holy Ghost upon Believers”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*... p. 5.

Father Stăniloae shows that far from having a character of pure theological-philosophical speculation, **the teaching about the uncreated energies of God, in the Orthodox Church, it has a practical character, of work, respectively of sustaining the entire work of the Church as laboratory of salvation:**

*“The Orthodox teaching about the uncreated works (in Greek: energies) of God, which touch and penetrate the beings, and which start from the Holy Ghost, it has a practical use in the whole cult of the Orthodox Church.”*⁵²⁶

Father Stăniloae shows that the scholastic approach of a God Who lives “in an inaccessible transcendent” makes the substance of faith disappear, and the faith becomes a sterile philosophizing. Whether God is isolated in heavens, we wonder, who is the one who dwell His Church? And whether the Church isn’t dwelled by God Himself, how can, then, the Church be savior? Salvation requires the effort, and the opening of the men, but it is done by God. And in the Orthodox Church the believers are taught that:

*“(...) God is here, is felt working differently, according to the diverse needs of them and of each believer separately. The prayer of the believers done in common, or of each believer individually (...) are felt and benefiting immediately of listening from the part of God and of the help given by Him (...)”*⁵²⁷

The Orthodox believers do not come to Church for participating to a cult as to some commemoration of a God Whom they cannot reach at, for He left for a heaven inaccessible to us, but the Orthodox come to sustain a

⁵²⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe, mediul al lucrării Sfântului Duh asupra credincioșilor” (“The Cult of the Orthodox Church, Environment of the Word of the Holy Ghost upon Believers”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*... p. 5.

⁵²⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe, mediul al lucrării Sfântului Duh asupra credincioșilor” (“The Cult of the Orthodox Church, Environment of the Word of the Holy Ghost upon Believers”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*... p. 6.

dialogue with the living God. Father Stăniloae shows in this sense that:

*“The cult (...) is a real dialogue between them (the believers, o. n.) and God (...) They (the believers, o. n.) (...) pray themselves for fulfilling their own concrete needs, and the needs of the one together present in the Church, or also for the needs of the ones who are absent but close to them.”*⁵²⁸

The living manifestations of the Orthodox believers, within a living Church, are the result of the faith in, and of the feeling of the presence of Christ and of the Holy Ghost within Church, especially when cultic manifestations take place. The Orthodox believers dialogue with a present and living God, so that the dialogue is alive and between living partners. By isolating God into heavens, the Churches doing this, by preaching a wrong teaching, they cut themselves off from the vine and they separate their believers from the source of the life, so that the work of the Holy Ghost is no longer felt by them as savior and present within Church. Their faith becomes an intellectual exercise, which, not being able to receive the Ghost of the Truth, how can it be “in Ghost and Truth”?

If Christ and the Holy Ghost aren't believed as being present within Church during the cultic activities, then, coming close to the transformed matter of the impartation won't imply any longer an emotion and shyness, for it will become a formal one, as a “juridical debt” to be fulfilled in the virtue of some deeds committed in the past. In the Orthodox cult, the presence of Christ, as permanent sacrifice, and of His Holy Ghost in living work, it determines the priest, due to his care for the believers, to warn them, to remember them, that they are coming close to the Most-Precious Body and to the Most-Holy Blood of Christ God; therefore, he asks them, when they are to be imparted, the followings:

⁵²⁸ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe, mediul al lucrării Sfântului Duh asupra credincioșilor” (“The Cult of the Orthodox Church, Environment of the Word of the Holy Ghost upon Believers”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*... p. 6.

*“With fear of God, with faith, and with love, come closer.”*⁵²⁹

Thus, the believers, says Father Stăniloae:

*“(...) they feel that the Holy Ghost, of Whom the Body of Christ is full, it comes to enlighten them and to clean them up of all defilement and to give them power to truly transform their life.”*⁵³⁰

His holiness also shows that, during the Holy Liturgy, the believers feel the stream of the gifts of the Holy Ghost and of His works, and of the uncreated energies put to work, but the more spiritualized the believer is, the more concrete this feeling becomes. The believers are increasingly imparted by the Holy Ghost, on the measure they advance towards the state of betterment, in which they will be saved.

Father Stăniloae vividly expresses the difference between the presence and the manifestation of the Holy Ghost within the Orthodox Churches, unlike the preaching from other diverse Christian denominations:

*“The Orthodox Christians aren’t being urged to try to guess the way of being of a God Who remains distant to them, by using the infinitesimal narrowness of their rationality, but they are bathing themselves in the unmediated present ocean of the powers of God, worker through His countless and mysterious energies, which answer their always different and always spiritually grown up and much differentiated needs.”*⁵³¹

Father Stăniloae shows that if someone tries to communicate about God by using his intellect and the

⁵²⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe, mediul al lucrării Sfântului Duh asupra credincioșilor” (“The Cult of the Orthodox Church, Environment of the Word of the Holy Ghost upon Believers”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*... p. 7.

⁵³⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe, mediul al lucrării Sfântului Duh asupra credincioșilor” (“The Cult of the Orthodox Church, Environment of the Word of the Holy Ghost upon Believers”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*... p. 7.

⁵³¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe, mediul al lucrării Sfântului Duh asupra credincioșilor” (“The Cult of the Orthodox Church, Environment of the Word of the Holy Ghost upon Believers”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*... p. 7.

scholastic speculations, this attempt is doomed to fail from the beginning, because how could somebody communicate the not-comprised One through something so limited as the human intellect is?:

“The words alone, which rather explain ideas, than to transmit powers, they are unable to communicate God, in His indefinite living and working, no matter how skillful and sentimental would they be. The sentiments accompanying these words, without the conviction of the concomitant work of God, they are accompanied both within the soul of the one who utters them and in the soul of the one who listens to them, rather by the impression of having a subjective character, or that they owe their more remarkable accents to the talent of the preacher, who doesn’t always shelter himself against the own impression and the one of his listeners, that he cannot avoid a certain shadow of pride.”⁵³²

In consent with his holiness we also believe that, in the words of the man who speaks too much, there God is silent.

Father Stăniloae nuances his affirmation from above, by showing that Orthodoxy doesn't refuse the word's power of conviction, when they are uttered in prayers, in blessings, and in praises, or when they are song in the holy hymns of the Church. But the words uttered by the believers are completed and sustained by the work of the Holy Ghost, and by the presence of Christ God in the Holy Mysteries, coming, through all of these:

“(...) in fact, the godlike powers, bringing benefactor effects upon believers and upon the objects brought by believers within Church on this purpose.”⁵³³

His holiness adds also that:

⁵³² Dumitru Stăniloae, „Cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe, mediul al lucrării Sfântului Duh asupra credincioșilor” (“The Cult of the Orthodox Church, Environment of the Word of the Holy Ghost upon Believers”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*... p. 8.

⁵³³ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe, mediul al lucrării Sfântului Duh asupra credincioșilor” (“The Cult of the Orthodox Church, Environment of the Word of the Holy Ghost upon Believers”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*... p. 8.

“And it will be well, if the word of preaching, of the priest (...) does not remain a simple speculative exposé about God.”⁵³⁴

The continuity into the Holy Ghost of all the elements of the Church’s cult is expressed by Father Stăniloae thus:

“Any Holy Liturgy, any Mystery of the Church, and any religious service, it is a continuation of the Pentecost, or of the Descent of the Holy Ghost and of His work upon the ones gathered together in the “upper room”⁵³⁵, in prayer. The believers gather together full of the fear of God, or being penetrated by the conscience or by the feeling of the work from above nature of the Holy Ghost (...).”⁵³⁶

Within Church, on the occasion of diverse manifestations of the cult:

“(...) it is done a true union of the soul with the Holy Ghost and an overflowing of His powers upon believers.”⁵³⁷

By participating within Church to the Holy Religious Services, the believers receive charismas, by the will of the Holy Ghost, but these gifts must be exercises so that the Church to become even richer spiritually. If the believers burry

⁵³⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe, mediul al lucrării Sfântului Duh asupra credincioșilor” (“The Cult of the Orthodox Church, Environment of the Word of the Holy Ghost upon Believers”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*... p. 8.

⁵³⁵ It can be noticed here the use of the rhetorical means of the metaphor, for calling the Church with the name of the place chosen by Christ for the Last Supper. In the same time, Father Stăniloae explains some of the symbolic meanings of the metaphor: “in the upper room”: “(...) a dwelling place elevated above the rooms destined for the usual needs. The Church in its quality of general Body of Christ it comes to existence in a room capable to become churchly dwelling place, through the meeting of the believers and through the works of the Holy Ghost”. (quoted work, p. 8)

⁵³⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe, mediul al lucrării Sfântului Duh asupra credincioșilor” (“The Cult of the Orthodox Church, Environment of the Word of the Holy Ghost upon Believers”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*... p. 8.

⁵³⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe, mediul al lucrării Sfântului Duh asupra credincioșilor” (“The Cult of the Orthodox Church, Environment of the Word of the Holy Ghost upon Believers”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*... p. 9.

their talent or their talents, which they have received according to their faith, they will be judged for their deed. This is because by doing this they disregard the gift. Maybe this is also what Christ wants to transmit us through the parable⁵³⁸ He tells us, and through the fact that the one who received the least, he didn't multiplied his gift at all, respectively that when we have little faith we receive little, because, anyway, we do not have enough faith to fructify what we have received. And receiving and not fructifying the gifts of the Holy Ghost it brings judgment instead of salvation.

By affirming the faith in the charismas received, during the cult, by the believers, through the communion with the Holy Ghost, Father Stăniloae shows that:

*“The Orthodox Church (...) proves to be the continuator of the Church from the time of the Apostles, through its faith and practice.”*⁵³⁹

The prayers of the Orthodox believers are “crying for help”, says Father Stăniloae; these prayers, done for themselves, by the ones who participate to the Holy Religious Services, or for their fellow humans, present or absent, for living and for dead, with the faith in the presence and in the work of Christ and of the Holy Ghost within Church, they bring: **“The gift of forgiveness and of goodness of the eternal life”**⁵⁴⁰, **namely the salvation.**

By exercising the cult, the Orthodox Church prays to God to pour His benefactions and the gifts of the Holy Ghost not only upon the believers, present or absent, but:

*“The prayers of the holy religious services have also a content that **aims the entire seen and unseen cosmic environment**. For in this cosmic environment lives and advances the life of the man, and he prays for this cosmic environment to be made by God*

⁵³⁸ Mattew 25: 14-30.

⁵³⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe, mediul al lucrării Sfântului Duh asupra credincioșilor” (“The Cult of the Orthodox Church, Environment of the Word of the Holy Ghost upon Believers”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*... p. 10.

⁵⁴⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe, mediul al lucrării Sfântului Duh asupra credincioșilor” (“The Cult of the Orthodox Church, Environment of the Word of the Holy Ghost upon Believers”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*... p. 10.

favorable to man's spiritual growth, for not impeding him to remain in the communion with God, under the watch of His loving face, the only one that can strengthen and make happy."⁵⁴¹

We believe that through the cult of the Church, by asking for and by receiving, as gift, the descent of the Holy Ghost, the believers fulfill the task given to them since the creation, that of transfiguring the creation, by spiritualizing themselves and the creation, and of turning themselves and the creation back to their Creator, as sacrifice of love brought to God.

Father Stăniloae says that:

*"The cult is therefore the main means of spiritual growth of the man and through this anticipation of the eschatological happiness. It (the cult, o. n.) accustoms us to an increasingly accentuated living with God, or into God, under the rain of rays of His love, which lightens, strengthens, and elevates our life, without making it careless towards the life of our fellow humans, but by urging it to become an increasingly greater factor of helping, of sustaining, of comforting, and of right-advising of them."*⁵⁴²

The cult is the savior work of the whole Church, in its concrete unveiling.

Father Stăniloae shows that the uncreated energies starting from God through the Holy Ghost:

"(...) are meant to lead towards the deification and the happiness into glory also the humanity of the ones who believe in Him. Thus, the uncreated energies from the Christian Orthodox cult work on the same purpose and they have the same power of gradually deifying the believers, through an

⁵⁴¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe, mediul al lucrării Sfântului Duh asupra credincioșilor” (“The Cult of the Orthodox Church, Environment of the Word of the Holy Ghost upon Believers”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*... p. 11.

⁵⁴² Dumitru Stăniloae, „Cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe, mediul al lucrării Sfântului Duh asupra credincioșilor” (“The Cult of the Orthodox Church, Environment of the Word of the Holy Ghost upon Believers”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*... pp. 11-12.

increasingly union with Christ, on the measure they themselves make efforts for cleaning themselves of the passions which tie them to the earthly things (...)"⁵⁴³

Working the uncreated energies received by the work of the Holy Ghost, it extends its blessed effect – the savior effect – also outside the Church seen as place of cult or as assembly of the believers, acting through all the creation.

IV. 2. Prayers for Others and the Synodality of the Church⁵⁴⁴

Father Stăniloae defines synodality, as attribute and as work of the Church, exhaustively, complexly, but still easy to be understood by the reader:

"Synodality of the Church is the opposite of the loneliness; it is the internal union of the Church's members as a whole, that has as consequence that within this whole are reflected the qualities and the life of everybody, and each one reflects the quality and the life of the whole. Synodality has an analogy in the report between the organism in whose unity is harmonized the totality of the component cells, with their life, and between the cells which partially reflect the specific qualities of the organism as a whole. Each component is explained and it exists through the whole, and the whole is sustained through the mysterious connection that unites all the cells. This connection is more than a simple consent of the parts; though, the whole is not outside the parts or without parts. Synodality is not manifested only in the common sustaining of the faith, of the cult, and of the organization of the Church, but it sustains and it present the life of the Church itself, and of each

⁵⁴³ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe, mediul al lucrării Sfântului Duh asupra credincioșilor” (“The Cult of the Orthodox Church, Environment of the Word of the Holy Ghost upon Believers”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*... p. 12.

⁵⁴⁴ Title taken from Dumitru Stăniloae, „Rugăciunile pentru alții și sobornicitatea Bisericii” (“The Prayers for Others and the Synodality of the Church”), *Studii Teologice (Theological Studies)*, no. 1-2 / 1970.

member of the Church. Synodality is the work of the relentless love that reigns within Church and of which ultimate source is Christ with the Holy Ghost Who irradiates from Him.”⁵⁴⁵

Father Stăniloae considers the connecting of the believers to the Church as an organic and vital connecting, the believers not being able to live outside it, but into and through Church, and this is because only through Church the believers are connected to the vital energies of the Ghost of Christ. The Synodality of the Church is, ultimately, this together-living for the spiritual “survival” of the believers within world and for their savior passing into the life to come.

It is to be highlighted also the fact that Father Stăniloae shows that the synodality of the Church doesn't mean annulling the individuality, it doesn't mean merging the individual in an amorphous mass of the Church, but it means instead preserving the identity of each believer, for the synodality having as source the Holy Trinity, it is infused by the same qualities which come from the Communion of the Holy Trinity, namely by perichoresis, but in the same time the preservation of the identity of the Trinitarian Persons; and we must also mention here, that synodality has the love at its basis, thing coming also from the fact that the relations amongst believers within Church have as model, the relations between the Persons of the Holy Trinity.

We believe that **Father Stăniloae is the greatest representative of the Personalism⁵⁴⁶ and of the Communion, both in the Romanian and in the universal theology.** The whole his theology has at its basis these two fundamental notions: the Person and the Communion.

Father Stăniloae sees the synodality of the Church as having at its basis the communication between believers, as persons, and he notices, in the quote presented bellow, a less encountered nuance in the theological writings, namely the communion through the responsibility we have for our fellow human:

⁵⁴⁵ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Rugăciunile pentru alții și sobornicitatea Bisericii” (“The Prayers for Others and the Synodality of the Church”), *Studii Teologice (Theological Studies)*... p. 29.

⁵⁴⁶ We use here the term of Personalism with the meaning of „Philosophical current sustaining that person is the supreme value” (www.dex.ro)

*“Love has forms of dialogue, of communication between persons. Synodality is manifested therefore as a communication between persons. Even if a person is apparently alone, **it is in communication with others through the responsibility he lives for those ones**, through his preoccupation with those ones, through his will to help them in a way or another. And those persons use the preoccupation of the respective person with them, even if they do not know about it.”⁵⁴⁷*

Also, Father Stăniloae notices a more rarely expressed connection between the prayer for others – as form of manifesting the love of the believers – and the responsibility of those ones, for the ones for whom they pray. And also more rarely is met the consideration according to which the ones who are praying, they are in a dialogue with the ones for whom they are praying. Here must be mentioned also the fact that his holiness affirms that, even if the “beneficiary” of the prayer is not aware of the fact that somebody is praying for him, though the prayer of that one is useful to him:

*“In this communication an important role falls to the prayer of each person for others. The person who is praying is in a dialogue, in communication with the one for whom he is praying, it is in the exercise of a responsibility for that person. When two persons are praying for each other, both of them are in the exercise of the responsibility for each other. When only a person is praying for another, the last one is not in this exercise of the responsibility and isn’t consciously noticing the exercise of responsibility for him of the other person. But, ultimately, he has a profit from the prayer of the first one. In any case, **there is no prayer without responsibility**, and in the responsibility, a person experiences the connection he is in, with another person, connection that doesn’t either depend on his will nor on the will*

⁵⁴⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Rugăciunile pentru alții și sobornicitatea Bisericii” (“The Prayers for Others and the Synodality of the Church”), *Studii Teologice (Theological Studies)*... p. 29.

*of the other one, but on the dialogical structure imprinted in each person and in the Church also, by the Ghost of Christ, Who strengthens this dialogical connection between persons.*⁵⁴⁸

Father Stăniloae considers the dialogical communication between persons as taking place also through the concrete deeds the believers do for each other. The responsibility for these deeds has God Himself as source, and the believers know from the Revelation that if they do not exercise the responsibility for other people, through prayer and through good deeds, they won't be saved. If they don't work the commandments and the virtues prescribed by the Church, even if they formally consider themselves as being part of it, their affirmation remains a formal question, and they only partially benefit of the synodality of the Church. **Working and praying within Church's synodality: behold the way to salvation.**

Father Stăniloae shows that remaining in the synodial dialogue of the Church, it defends the believers against straying, otherwise:

“(...) the one who doesn't remain in the connection of the dialogue with the other one, by answering his calling, he falls himself in the emptiness of the loneliness, namely of a phantasmagorical, of nightmare existence.”⁵⁴⁹

Synodality of the Church defends the believers, as we have affirmed above, of straying, acting as a regulatory mechanism, as an immunity system, against all kind of roving and heresies. Amongst the errors affecting the Church these days, especially poisonous are the so-called *soft attacks*⁵⁵⁰,

⁵⁴⁸ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Rugăciunile pentru alții și sobornicitatea Bisericii” (“The Prayers for Others and the Synodality of the Church”), *Studii Teologice (Theological Studies)*... p. 29.

⁵⁴⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Rugăciunile pentru alții și sobornicitatea Bisericii” (“The Prayers for Others and the Synodality of the Church”), *Studii Teologice (Theological Studies)*... p. 30.

⁵⁵⁰ It is being aimed the gradual weakening of the Christendom, in a slow but steady pace, which to not arise opposition, through the fact that the proposed changes falsely use generous but twisted principles, and through the fact that by repeatedly accepting the

which aim changing, step by step, the conscience and the faith, attacks inscribed in the wider plan of the offensive of the political correctness, which has at its basis the neo-Marxism. Through its synodality, the Church sustains the believers on the way of salvation and it can even defend them concretely, by materially and socially supporting them, fact that, even if today is not very acute, **tomorrow will be vital**. The interests and the pressure groups from under the influence of the enemy, they aim to kill the Church of Christ, in general (even if, in order to have some success, they start by affirming that they only want to eliminate the “Orthodox fundamentalism”), they are working to that the survival within world, of the Christian believers, to be impeded by their faith into Christ. In other words, by laying their hands on the material flows of the world, they want to oust the Christians from accessing them.

Though we have affirmed the things from above, we must express here our personal belief that nothing happens without being allowed by the Holy Trinity and nothing can be successful against God. If God allows, for a while, to be our faith tried, it is because from His all-good love for people, He wants to elevate us spiritually. The little sufferance from now will be rewarded with the eternal happiness. And regarding the material aspects, if we are able to receive the entire Revelation, into Ghost and Truth, we will receive also the fact that the matter, through the power of the Ghost, it can be overwhelmed, and with a few fish and with a few breads, the believers, by the will of God, they will survive. And here we must also express our opinion that **the purpose of the life is the salvation and not the material survival**.

Behold how Father Stăniloae describes the spiritual survival of the believers, their staying into faith, under the savior shelter of the synodial Church:

“The image (Father Stăniloae explains here a spiritual vision of Saint Pachomius, with some believers being in a cave, and going towards the exit light, while holding each other by hands, by and sustaining one another, o. n.), it fits the synodial

changes, it leads to accustoming the society as ensemble, to the evil, so that the social antibodies are no longer able to identify the aggression of the neo-Marxism’s viruses.

connection amongst the Church's members in general. They sustain one another, having in front of them the priests and the hierarchs of the Church, all of them advancing together towards the kingdom of the eternal light, having, since on earth, a certain earnest of it. Immediately after one breaks himself out from the chain, either he remains by himself or he enters a smaller group that moves around some chieftain of personal character, wandering in a darkness without exit, in a lack of understanding of the meaning of the existence and of its purpose”⁵⁵¹.

Father Stăniloae shows the reflexive character of the responsibility and of the prayer for others:

“Who sustains others he sustains himself through the ones he sustains; who gives power he receives power.”⁵⁵²

In the same idea his holiness shows that:

“One can say that the deed through which somebody helps and sustains others, it is the occasion of the means through which God sustains him; it is the effort which, by mobilizing somebody's energies, it is the sign of the divine presence, communicated towards the profit of the one who makes this effort, and towards the good of the one in whose favor it is made.”⁵⁵³

Behold that we are shown here the fact that nobody, by praying or by working for another, is deprived of godlike help; he doesn't work outside God, and his benefaction has effect

⁵⁵¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Rugăciunile pentru alții și sobornicitatea Bisericii” (“The Prayers for Others and the Synodality of the Church”), *Studii Teologice (Theological Studies)*... p. 30.

⁵⁵² Dumitru Stăniloae, „Rugăciunile pentru alții și sobornicitatea Bisericii” (“The Prayers for Others and the Synodality of the Church”), *Studii Teologice (Theological Studies)*... p. 30.

⁵⁵³ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Rugăciunile pentru alții și sobornicitatea Bisericii” (“The Prayers for Others and the Synodality of the Church”), *Studii Teologice (Theological Studies)*... p. 30.

both upon the recipient of the deed or of the prayer, and also upon the one who works or prays:

*“Disposition of receiving and transmitting generously the divine help is shown in the prayer and in the deed for others.”*⁵⁵⁴

Manifestation of the believer's responsibility for his Christian fellows, it takes the form of praying and of the deed for others. The Christian is held responsible before God, for his deeds and attitudes regarding his neighbor; this responsibility is placed by God, when He gave us the Decalogue, on the second position, after the commandment of loving Him. Even the Savior confirms it, and legitimizes it once more, as envoy of God, and as Son of God, and as One from Trinity, by putting together the two commandments in one:

*“And loving Him with all heart, with all soul, and with all thought, and with all power, and to love your neighbor as yourself it is more than all whole burnt offerings, and more than all sacrifices.”*⁵⁵⁵

Father Staniloae says that this responsibility for the neighbor is in the same time, recognizing and accepting the responsibility in front of God, these responsibilities involving and presupposing one another. His holiness illustrates this perichoresis of the two responsibilities by analyzing the fact that Christians ask one another, to pray for one another:

“The appeal of a believer to another: «Pray for me, brother (or father)!» is the manifestation of his conscience that he depends simultaneously on God and on the neighbor. But it is also an appeal to the responsibility of that one before God, but to a responsibility in which is included the responsibility for his fellow humans, including for the one who

⁵⁵⁴ Dumitru Staniloae, „Rugăciunile pentru alții și sobornicitatea Bisericii” (“The Prayers for Others and the Synodality of the Church”), *Studii Teologice (Theological Studies)*... p. 31.

⁵⁵⁵ Mark 12: 33. In KJB we have: “And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.”

appeals him. Through this appeal he awakens the twofold responsibility of that one: towards God and towards the one who appeals him. In this sense, even that one, who appeals somebody, he gives to that somebody the occasion to be awakened. The dialogue consists in the appeal of someone and in the answer, somehow necessary, of another. The appeal must be followed by the answer.”⁵⁵⁶

But also the one who appeals, he owes to pray for the one he has appealed to:

“Thus, both of them, they feel themselves simultaneously responsible before God for one another. Both of them are tied to God, and one to another, through the answer each of them must give to God for the other one. The reciprocal appeal for praying awakens their dialogical connection with God and to each other. The connection between believers is a connection into God and vice versa: the connection of a believer with God is a connection with other believers.”⁵⁵⁷

Remembrance of the dead ones shows that Christian believers feel themselves responsible also for their fellow humans who passed away. This remembrance of the ones who passed away is, in the Orthodox Church, the expression of the savior work of the Church, work that aims to comprise all the people in it, for:

“(…) God wants to save all people.”⁵⁵⁸

⁵⁵⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Rugăciunile pentru alții și sobornicitatea Bisericii” (“The Prayers for Others and the Synodality of the Church”), *Studii Teologice (Theological Studies)*... p. 31.

⁵⁵⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Rugăciunile pentru alții și sobornicitatea Bisericii” (“The Prayers for Others and the Synodality of the Church”), *Studii Teologice (Theological Studies)*... p. 31.

⁵⁵⁸ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Rugăciunile pentru alții și sobornicitatea Bisericii” (“The Prayers for Others and the Synodality of the Church”), *Studii Teologice (Theological Studies)*... p. 32.

Father Stăniloae shows that God want to save the believers in communion with Himself, but also in communion with their fellow humans:

“(...) God wants to associate everybody in His generous impulse towards all people, for all people to rejoice simultaneously of the divine generosity and of the generosity of as many as possible people, or through the generosity of as many as possible people. That’s why God doesn’t forget the ones who passed away, and makes the living one to not forget them.”⁵⁵⁹

His holiness quotes Saint John Damascene who shows that the close ones of the deceased:

“(...) being moved from above and through the touch of the Master, their hearts will complete the shortcomings of the deceased ones.”⁵⁶⁰

Behold the way the Church manifests its works of laboratory of salvation, for the deceased ones, through the love of the living ones. Respectively, the savior action of the Church is prolonged for the human persons also after their passing into eternity. But the ones who hope to receive help, after their death, from the living ones, they are asked to have a minimum of virtue accumulated during their life, for, behold the warning from Father Stăniloae to the ones who totally estranged themselves from God while they were living:

“But to the one who left this life with a total bodily thought, after his death, nobody will give him a helping hand, because neither God has him in His memory.”⁵⁶¹

⁵⁵⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Rugăciunile pentru alții și sobornicitatea Bisericii” (“The Prayers for Others and the Synodality of the Church”), *Studii Teologice (Theological Studies)*... p. 33.

⁵⁶⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Rugăciunile pentru alții și sobornicitatea Bisericii” (“The Prayers for Others and the Synodality of the Church”), *Studii Teologice (Theological Studies)*... p. 33.

⁵⁶¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Rugăciunile pentru alții și sobornicitatea Bisericii” (“The Prayers for Others and the Synodality of the Church”), *Studii Teologice (Theological Studies)*... p. 33.

If during his life, he totally refuses the dialogue with God, to the deceased one, it will be impossible to enter this dialogue after death. For the Church to be able to pray efficiently for the deceased ones, they must have been when dying: “*in dialogical connection with God*”⁵⁶². Once the believers entered the dialogical connection to God, this connection is no longer interrupted:

“*(...) God no longer allows these ones to exit the connection with Him, after they cannot do anything more for progressing into this connection. They remain “in the memory of God”. But who remains in the memory of God he remains in His preoccupation. And the one who remains in the preoccupation of God he remains in connection with God. And this one doesn't totally die spiritually; he remains spiritually alive in some measure, through the preoccupation of God for him.*”⁵⁶³

Father Stăniloae shows that the initiative of praying for the deceased ones, it only partially belongs to us, but, like all the savior works done through man, the prayer for the ones who passed away, it benefits at its turn of the impulse and of the support from God:

“*Whether we also pray God to “remember” the deceased ones, this doesn't mean that we have the initiative in remembering them, but it means that God needs our answer (...).*”⁵⁶⁴

We rather think that our love as clean sacrifice for the deceased ones, it pacifies, in some measure, God; Father Stăniloae's affirmation, that God would need something from

⁵⁶² Dumitru Stăniloae, „Rugăciunile pentru alții și sobornicitatea Bisericii” (“The Prayers for Others and the Synodality of the Church”), *Studii Teologice (Theological Studies)*... p. 33.

⁵⁶³ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Rugăciunile pentru alții și sobornicitatea Bisericii” (“The Prayers for Others and the Synodality of the Church”), *Studii Teologice (Theological Studies)*... p. 33.

⁵⁶⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Rugăciunile pentru alții și sobornicitatea Bisericii” (“The Prayers for Others and the Synodality of the Church”), *Studii Teologice (Theological Studies)*... p. 33.

people falls in contradiction to the words of the Psalmist: “*I told the Lord: «My Lord are You, for You need not my good things»*”⁵⁶⁵.

Father Stăniloae shows that human memory being limited, the deceased ones fall gradually in forgetfulness, but the living ones must have a permanent dialogical connection with God; and through the prayers towards God for the deceased ones we give God, and them, love:

“*Who remembers somebody, he helps him to stay alive*”⁵⁶⁶; “*When we ask from God “the eternal remembrance” for somebody, we ask for (...) keeping him ceaselessly alive*”⁵⁶⁷.

Father Stăniloae shows that the dialogue with the deceased ones has two sides completing on each other: the prayer and the giving of alms. The last one, done on behalf of the deceased ones, makes them be remembered also by the beneficiaries of the alms.

The ones who remember the deceased one:

“*(...) speak to each other about the deceased one and to him and to God. The synodality of the Church isn’t limited only to the relations amongst the living ones, but it is extended also to the relations between them and the deceased ones.*”⁵⁶⁸

In this chapter Father Stăniloae expresses again the idea widely analyzed in his work entitled *Jesus Christ or the Man’s Restoration*, that relation of communion between persons has also a side that “imposes” (namely obliges to) a dialogue and to satisfying the needs of the other one we are in dialogue with:

⁵⁶⁵ Psalms 15: 2. In KJB we have Psalm 16: 2: “O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord: my goodness extendeth not to thee;”

⁵⁶⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Rugăciunile pentru alții și sobornicitatea Bisericii” (“The Prayers for Others and the Synodality of the Church”), *Studii Teologice (Theological Studies)*... p. 34.

⁵⁶⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Rugăciunile pentru alții și sobornicitatea Bisericii” (“The Prayers for Others and the Synodality of the Church”), *Studii Teologice (Theological Studies)*... p. 35.

⁵⁶⁸ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Rugăciunile pentru alții și sobornicitatea Bisericii” (“The Prayers for Others and the Synodality of the Church”), *Studii Teologice (Theological Studies)*... p. 33.

*“What I am experiencing is limit and freedom in the same time; it is coerciveness before the other one, duty to listen and though joy for fulfilling that will, free and happy impulse for serving.”*⁵⁶⁹

The savior action of the Church, in its Synodality, as Father Stăniloae shows, it presupposes that:

*“The perfecting dialogue must fully comprise all the believers, all the Church’s members, all the ones who are in some measure into Christ, so also the deceased ones.”*⁵⁷⁰ And that: *“By giving alms, gain not only the deceased ones but also the ones who give alms on behalf of them and the ones whom the alms are given.”*⁵⁷¹

Father Stăniloae reiterates here his idea according to which the historical time is given to the mankind for participating to the savior process of bringing the human being and the creation, through deification, back to their Creator, and that the time and the life within world are given to the man for his personal salvation and for the salvation of his neighbor, within Church. So that:

*“God doesn’t forget any good deed done to others for all these deeds are inscribed in a progress line of the mankind towards a superior stage of kindness”*⁵⁷²; *“The world is given to us in the phase of moral and*

⁵⁶⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Iisus Hristos sau restaurarea omului (Jesus Christ or the Man’s Restoration)*, Omnis cop Publishing House, Craiova, 1993, p. 24.

⁵⁷⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Rugăciunile pentru alții și sobornicitatea Bisericii” (“The Prayers for Others and the Synodality of the Church”), *Studii Teologice (Theological Studies)*, no. 1-2 / 1970, p. 36.

⁵⁷¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Rugăciunile pentru alții și sobornicitatea Bisericii” (“The Prayers for Others and the Synodality of the Church”), *Studii Teologice (Theological Studies)*... p. 36.

⁵⁷² Dumitru Stăniloae, „Rugăciunile pentru alții și sobornicitatea Bisericii” (“The Prayers for Others and the Synodality of the Church”), *Studii Teologice (Theological Studies)*... p. 36.

*spiritual construction, while we live on earth, for participating, all of us, to this building.”*⁵⁷³

Father Stăniloae shows that:

*“The greatest help comes to the deceased ones from remembering them at the Holy Liturgy.”*⁵⁷⁴

Damnation of the sinners it means their incapacity to receive the love from God, sufferance they condemned themselves to, for eternity, by the fact they refused the dialogue of love, with Him. Such a damned soul:

*“(...) falls in the loneliness of being forsaken and forgotten by all, in the extreme opposite of the Synodality. And this is the hell”*⁵⁷⁵; *“(...) eternal silence and loneliness will surround him; it follows his exit from any dialogue forever. He won’t be able to appeal anybody, and he won’t have the occasion to answer anybody. No trace of communion will be possible with anybody. He will sink «in the outer darkness».”*⁵⁷⁶

Concluding the analyzing of the aspects which determine the Synodality of the Orthodox Church, Father Stăniloae shows that:

“Christ, with His sacrifice relentlessly offered for everybody, by keeping them in connection with Himself, in the dialogue of bringing them to the

⁵⁷³ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Rugăciunile pentru alții și sobornicitatea Bisericii” (“The Prayers for Others and the Synodality of the Church”), *Studii Teologice (Theological Studies)*... p. 38.

⁵⁷⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Rugăciunile pentru alții și sobornicitatea Bisericii” (“The Prayers for Others and the Synodality of the Church”), *Studii Teologice (Theological Studies)*... p. 38.

⁵⁷⁵ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Rugăciunile pentru alții și sobornicitatea Bisericii” (“The Prayers for Others and the Synodality of the Church”), *Studii Teologice (Theological Studies)*... p. 37.

⁵⁷⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Rugăciunile pentru alții și sobornicitatea Bisericii” (“The Prayers for Others and the Synodality of the Church”), *Studii Teologice (Theological Studies)*... p. 37.

Father through Himself, it is the source of the Church's synodality.”⁵⁷⁷

IV. 3. Cross in the Theology and in the Cult of the Church⁵⁷⁸

The symbol of Christ's sacrifice, as also of the sacrificial attitude the believer who wants to be saved must manifest it, the cross occupies a central place within Orthodox Church. About cross, father Stăniloae shows that:

“According to Eastern thinking though, the Cross itself is a power that produces resurrection and in resurrection there is present, in some measure, eternally, the cross. The cross has itself a force of defeating sin and death, a power that advances towards resurrection and it is finalized through resurrection.”^{579 580}

We want to say here that Father Stăniloae refers to the cross as symbol of Christ's sacrifice, to the Cross of Christ, and not to the cross as object - in that case it would have been idolatry. Neither the icons have power from themselves, but from the Ones represented on icons – even the wonders-doer icons; they work through the power of the ones represented by them and not through the power of the wood or of the paint. To

⁵⁷⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Rugăciunile pentru alții și sobornicitatea Bisericii” (“The Prayers for Others and the Synodality of the Church”), *Studii Teologice (Theological Studies)*... p. 37.

⁵⁷⁸ Title taken from Dumitru Stăniloae, “Crucea în teologia și cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe” („Cross in Theology and in the Cult of the Orthodox Church”), *Ortodoxia, Probleme Interconfesionale (The Orthodoxy, Interconfessional Problems)*, no. 3-4, 1971.

⁵⁷⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, “Crucea în teologia și cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe” („Cross in the Theology and in the Cult of the Orthodox Church”)... p. 405.

⁵⁸⁰ We provide here “The Prayer of the Holy Cross”, a prayer we consider of a special nature: “Let God resurrect, and let His enemies to be scattered, and let the ones who hate Him to run away from His face. Let perish as the smoke perishes, as the wax melts from the face of the fire, so to perish the demons from the face of the ones who love God and mark upon themselves with the sign of the cross, by saying: Rejoice, most honored and life-maker cross of the Lord, you who banish away the devils with the power of the One Who was crucified on you, of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Who descended to hell and He trampled the power of the devil and He gave us you, His honored Cross, towards banishing any enemy. Oh, you most honored and life maker Cross of the Lord, help also me, with the Holy Virgin, Birth Giver of God, and with all the saints, forever. Amen. (Book of Prayers)

the worshipper is transmitted through icons the grace of the Ghost of Christ.

“(...) the cross of the Lord is a ladder towards heavens (...)”⁵⁸¹ and “The cross as death of Christ brings death, through itself, to an end, and end of defeating death, namely it reverses the purpose of death, transforming it, from death that puts an end to life, in death that abolishes on itself, setting the life free from death”⁵⁸²; likewise: “The resurrection is shown fully actualized, manifested by Christ in enduring the cross.”⁵⁸³

The state of continuous sacrifice of Christ for our salvation, it makes His cross to “**NOT** become a simple event from the past, taught for preserving the grateful memory”⁵⁸⁴. Catholicism and Protestantism, by considering that Christ left the world, and He “retired” himself in the silence of the heavens, they in fact kill Him again by “eliminating” Him, through their affirmations, from this world, within which He is, on the contrary, Alive and Working, together with the Holy Ghost, within His Church, and within the whole creation. From here comes also the easiness with which the heresies are born, because, whether Christ is no longer here, within world, but somewhere we cannot conceive, then He maybe was only a man, even if an exceptional one, Who died – or maybe (Forgive me God!) He didn’t even resurrect!... Behold where can lead the schism, and the cutting off from the Apostolic Church, and the straying of the people!

The Orthodox Church believes that Christ is living in His Church, relentlessly sacrificing Himself to the Father, for the salvation of all the people. In this sense Father Stăniloae shows that:

⁵⁸¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, “Crucea în teologia și cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe” („Cross in Theology and in the Cult of the Orthodox Church”)... p. 406.

⁵⁸² Dumitru Stăniloae, “Crucea în teologia și cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe” („Cross in Theology and in the Cult of the Orthodox Church”)... p. 406.

⁵⁸³ Dumitru Stăniloae, “Crucea în teologia și cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe” („Cross in Theology and in the Cult of the Orthodox Church”)... p. 406.

⁵⁸⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, “Crucea în teologia și cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe” („Cross in Theology and in the Cult of the Orthodox Church”)... p. 406.

“That’s why the cross is the sign of the final victory of the Son of Man, namely of God become man, that will be shown on the sky when He will come «into much power and glory» (Matthew 24: 30) to utter the judgment upon everybody and forever”⁵⁸⁵

In the cult of the Orthodox Church the cross has a day consecrated to its celebration, but it is present in all the manifestations of the believers, and in all the religious services of the Church. Related to this Father Stăniloae says that:

“(...) the cross, though as historical event of Christ’s crucifixion, it is celebrated on the Good Friday, as permanent power perpetuated in the Resurrection of Christ, and leads towards our resurrection; it is daily mentioned; it is invoked by Christians as help of power with which they mark upon themselves and all the things they use. It is placed on top of the churches’ towers, which have the Resurrected Christ within, and on the tops of the houses, and on the sides of the roads and at crossroads. Never is God, or Jesus Christ, mentioned, without being done the sign of the cross. The cross must be shown and raised as sign of Christ’s victory against sin, evil, and death.”⁵⁸⁶

The cross is celebrated also in other two days of the year: at the Raising of the Holy Cross, on 14th of September, and on that Sunday from the middle of the great fasting (it shows the intention of the Church to place it in the middle of the ascetic preparation through which one can reach at Christ). Referring to the way in which the Orthodox Church related itself to the Cross, Father Stăniloae shows that:

“The Orthodox Church expresses in a great richness of forms both the victorious power of the cross, upon

⁵⁸⁵ Dumitru Stăniloae, “Crucea în teologia și cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe” („Cross in Theology and in the Cult of the Orthodox Church”)... p. 406.

⁵⁸⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, “Crucea în teologia și cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe” („Cross in Theology and in the Cult of the Orthodox Church”)... pp. 406-407.

death, and the relentless continuation of this power.”⁵⁸⁷

The right-worshipper Christians, they live the cross; they do not theorize about it; Christ’s cross is also their cross, and, by opening themselves to Him, they renounce to the worldly things, and they take their cross and follow Him on the road to salvation:

“The cross is not a theological chapter, be it no matter how important, but it is present everywhere in the public cult, in the particular prayer and in the life of the Christians. It always accompanies them everywhere. It has universal importance as also the resurrection has, both of them being in an indissoluble jointing. The cross is the sole way and perspective of salvation from the nonsense of the sin and from death, and it is the sole way towards the life into the eternal light (...)”⁵⁸⁸

Cross is considered “as the wood opposed to the wood from Paradise, through which the mankind fell”⁵⁸⁹. The wood from Paradise is victory of the nature upon spirit; the wood of the cross is the victory of the spirit upon nature and the emancipation of the spirit from sin:

“The wood of the nature in the shape of a cross is no longer wood that tempts towards pleasures and means of tying the believer to the world, but a transparent means towards God, being brought back to its fundamental substance (rationality), disrobed of the tempting adornments.”⁵⁹⁰

⁵⁸⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, “Crucea în teologia și cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe” („Cross in Theology and in the Cult of the Orthodox Church”)... pp. 406-407.

⁵⁸⁸ Dumitru Stăniloae, “Crucea în teologia și cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe” („Cross in Theology and in the Cult of the Orthodox Church”)... p. 407.

⁵⁸⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, “Crucea în teologia și cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe” („Cross in Theology and in the Cult of the Orthodox Church”)... p. 408.

⁵⁹⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, “Crucea în teologia și cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe” („Cross in Theology and in the Cult of the Orthodox Church”)... p. 408.

Father Stăniloae by naming the Church as restored paradise, or beginning of the new paradise, he shows that:

“(...) the cross is placed within Church, as in a restored paradise, or as in a beginning of a restored paradise (...)”⁵⁹¹

The fruit of the cross, his holiness says:

“(...) it is the fruit of the power of restraining and of patience. The fruit through which our spirit is strengthened in his freedom and through which we ascend to God, to a higher sky, to the communion with God (...)”⁵⁹²

The man cannot enter the Kingdom of God without bearing the cross of fighting, in order to get out from sin by working the virtues. Witness for this is the fact that the first man who entered the paradise together with Christ is the thief, who: “also bears the cross”⁵⁹³.

By taking Christ’s cross upon us, His power is being given to us, His sacrificial state is being transmitted to us, and we are helped to walk the ways towards salvation:

“The power of the cross of Christ, taken also by us upon ourselves, it removes from the door of the paradise the sword of the cherubim. Because it removes the sin of the covetousness from within us, due to which the cherubim closes our way.”⁵⁹⁴

The hell is defeated through the cross, for the cross gives the power of abolishing the sin:

⁵⁹¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, “Crucea în teologia și cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe” („Cross in Theology and in the Cult of the Orthodox Church”)... p. 408.

⁵⁹² Dumitru Stăniloae, “Crucea în teologia și cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe” („Cross in Theology and in the Cult of the Orthodox Church”)... p. 408.

⁵⁹³ Dumitru Stăniloae, “Crucea în teologia și cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe” („Cross in Theology and in the Cult of the Orthodox Church”)... p. 408.

⁵⁹⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, “Crucea în teologia și cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe” („Cross in Theology and in the Cult of the Orthodox Church”), p. 408.

“(...) the hell – as definitive death – is being fed from sin.”⁵⁹⁵

But whether we look from the savior perspective of Christ's death of cross, the cross as impartation of Christ, it can be considered the tree of life.

Father Stăniloae sees such a tight connection between cross and Christ, so that he affirms:

“Actually, Christ cannot be thought without cross, namely without the effort and the patience which defeated death, without the power through which He defeated and took out from the human nature the affect of pain, by strengthening the spirit of the freedom of this nature against the temptation of avoiding death, by ceding to an automatic impulse of the nature.”⁵⁹⁶

At its turn, the cross thought without Christ, it isn't necessarily savior; it doesn't have the attributes of power given by Christ's sacrifice on the cross:

“We honor that cross, willingly and sinless endured by the Man Who was also God, for through that cross it has been given to our nature the victory upon death, or the resurrection to the eternal life.”⁵⁹⁷

Honoring the cross without believing in the state of permanent sacrifice of Christ before the Father, without believing in His permanent, and working through the Holy Ghost, presence, within His Church, it lacks substance, and just because of that, within churches which exile Christ in heavens, the cult of the cross loses its importance, it is diluted under the pressure of the worldly.

Father Stăniloae says about Christ that He has dressed up His cross with power, for:

⁵⁹⁵ Dumitru Stăniloae, “Crucea în teologia și cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe” („Cross in Theology and in the Cult of the Orthodox Church”), p. 410.

⁵⁹⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, “Crucea în teologia și cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe” („Cross in Theology and in the Cult of the Orthodox Church”), p. 410.

⁵⁹⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, “Crucea în teologia și cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe” („Cross in Theology and in the Cult of the Orthodox Church”), p. 411.

“(...) He soaked it with His clean and purifying blood, full of the power which removed, from our nature assumed by Him, the affects of pleasure and pain, and it defeated death, for us to defeat these affects too, and to not be us brought, by them, to the sin.”⁵⁹⁸

Behold how expressive, Father Stăniloae characterizes the savior power of the cross of Christ:

“The power of the cross is the power with good fragrance, of the cleanliness and of the life of Christ, which has been poured by Him in it, as in a vessel of chrism, enduring it without blemish and with patience, and which He continues to instill in it. Of this good fragrance are imparted the ones who die to sins, imprinting themselves with the cross of Christ, or receiving Christ within them, He Who is crucified on cross towards any affect (...)”⁵⁹⁹

The cross that is sanctified through a religious service of the Church, it receives its sanctifying power through the work of the Holy Ghost, so that, this sanctifying power is transmitted from a cross sanctified before, through the mediation of the water sanctified by that cross, to the cross being sanctified now:

“The fact that it is sanctified (the cross, o. n.), by previously sinking a sanctified cross, it shows the perpetuating of the sanctifying power of the Holy Ghost within Church, associated to the cross. Consequently, the present cross is being filled up with all the gifts which the blood of Christ filled up the cross He was crucified on.”⁶⁰⁰

⁵⁹⁸ Dumitru Stăniloae, “Crucea în teologia și cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe” („Cross in Theology and in the Cult of the Orthodox Church”)... p. 411.

⁵⁹⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, “Crucea în teologia și cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe” („Cross in Theology and in the Cult of the Orthodox Church”)... p. 411.

⁶⁰⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, “Crucea în teologia și cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe” („Cross in Theology and in the Cult of the Orthodox Church”)... p. 412.

On the basis of the faith in its holiness, the cross becomes omnipresent within Orthodox Church, in all the savior works. In this sense Father Stăniloae shows that:

“(...) if the Church believes that, through the prayer of the priest, the uncreated, sanctifying, and purifying energy, it is being poured upon the persons and the things they use, this sanctifier power is being poured through cross. For this, in the cult of the Orthodox Church everything is sanctified through cross.”⁶⁰¹

Therefore, whether the entire sanctifying action of the Orthodox Church's cult is realized in the presence of the cross of Christ, then, the cross occupies an essential role in believer's salvation. The Church, the laboratory within which the ones who believe in Christ are being saved, it has in the cross a defining element. The Church, the Body of Christ, it must remain as He is, in state of permanent sacrifice, crucified on His cross, dead to the sin and self-given, in total obedience, to God.

The sanctifying power of the cross isn't autonomous in report with the work of the Holy Ghost, but it is efficient only when the Ghost is called upon and present:

“But the sanctifying of the water, water with which, the most often, are sprayed all things towards sanctification, it is done not only by deepening the cross in it, but also by calling upon the Holy Ghost. The uncreated energies brought into creation by the Holy Ghost descend through the mediation of the cross, because through cross was broken and it is being broken the power of the sin, born from the love for bodily pleasure and from unrestraint affirmation of the pride; the Cross makes room within our being to the energy of the Holy Ghost, through the fact that it means the death of the creature in its autonomous affirmation towards God. The Holy Ghost doesn't spiritualize the creation without the cross. The cross opens the way to the Holy Ghost. The cross is,

⁶⁰¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, “Crucea în teologia și cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe” („Cross in Theology and in the Cult of the Orthodox Church”)... p. 412.

therefore, towards Paradise, or towards the center of the life into God. But this life is full of Holy Ghost. Between cross and the Holy Ghost there is an indissoluble connection, on the basis of the indissoluble connection between the Crucified Christ and the Holy Ghost. One cannot obtain the Holy Ghost, where one doesn't resists sins through cross.”⁶⁰²

The cross of Christ is a capital element for salvation, for it means restraining from sins and to be dead to the sins, and the ones who are saved must be cleaned up of sins. The ones who are saved, they bear as a victory flag, the cross:

“The cross is holly and sanctifier by excellence, for it gives the power of restraining from sin. But the sanctification achieved through cross it has its source and its coronation into Holy Ghost. The sanctification of the cross itself, it is done through the work of the Holy Ghost, Who comes with His uncreated energies, Who also worked within Christ’s body on the cross, defeating death.”⁶⁰³

We would dare to affirm here that, in all the savior works Christ does within world, through the perichoretic relation between the Persons of the Holy Trinity, there are also present the Father and the Holy Ghost. Although the work is of the Son, He is helped with love by the Ghost and He is not separated from the love and from the approval of the Father.

Through sanctification, namely by receiving the uncreated energies of the Holy Ghost:

“(...) the object carved in the sign of the cross, it is placed in connection with that cross Christ was crucified on, and it receives the power of that cross of Christ.”⁶⁰⁴

⁶⁰² Dumitru Stăniloae, “Crucea în teologia și cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe” („Cross in Theology and in the Cult of the Orthodox Church”)... p. 412.

⁶⁰³ Dumitru Stăniloae, “Crucea în teologia și cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe” („Cross in Theology and in the Cult of the Orthodox Church”)... p. 412.

⁶⁰⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, “Crucea în teologia și cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe” („Cross in Theology and in the Cult of the Orthodox Church”)... p. 413.

Father Stăniloae shows that meanings of the cross are three in number: 1) the cross Lord Christ was crucified on; 2) the cross sanctified through the Ghost of Christ; 3) the cross as power of mortifying the sins, through which we restrain ourselves from working evil deeds, and through which we endure the sufferings, attracted upon us by committing sins.

The cross is savior to the man, but also to the creation in general, for God wants to save the man, who to deify and to bring the creation back to Him, as well-pleasant sacrifice. Related to this Father Stăniloae says that:

“For Christ didn’t aim to elevate through cross, at this state, only the nature of the individual believer, but the whole nature.”⁶⁰⁵

Father Stăniloae shows that between cross and our salvation, there is an indissoluble connection, because we must come to Christ by restraining ourselves from sins, by working the virtues and the commandments, so, through some “sufferance”. If our salvation was outside this cross, then:

“Our resurrection wouldn’t internally be connected to the mortification of our sin and of our inferior impulses, to an elevation of our spirit towards it, but it would come as an external magic fact.”⁶⁰⁶ And: “To be all of us imparted with His resurrection, we must participate also to His cross, as road to resurrection, as road of spiritualization.”⁶⁰⁷

Being sinners, we want to choose Christ’s way, but without participating to His cross. And due to our sinfulness, we even dare sometimes to think that His way wouldn’t be so perfect, for it is one that brings some sufferance. But Christ doesn’t force us to follow Him, and He lets us the freedom to

⁶⁰⁵ Dumitru Stăniloae, “Crucea în teologia și cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe” („Cross in Theology and in the Cult of the Orthodox Church”)... p. 413.

⁶⁰⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, “Crucea în teologia și cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe” („Cross in Theology and in the Cult of the Orthodox Church”)... p. 413.

⁶⁰⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, “Crucea în teologia și cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe” („Cross in Theology and in the Cult of the Orthodox Church”)... p. 415.

choose. And then, if we truly want to follow Him, why do we speak against Him?

We are presenting bellow a more extended text with Father Stăniloae's considerations regarding the cross, all of them infused by a profound Christian Orthodox humanity:

"The cross means, in the Christian cogitation and life, any fight against evil, against the sin from within us, with the possible sources of the sin, with the egotism, any fight for cleaning our flowing being of the silt of the thoughts, and of the muddy and defiled feelings, for making it limpid spring of inward and external life. The cross is the restraining from the bad and ugly impulses, from the unrestrained and egotistical greediness, from the pleasure that decomposes us, from anger and envy, from the hatred for brothers, from gossips and from all the not-loving deed we want to commit towards others.

As such, the cross means the manly strength of the wise will, and of the well-intentioned mind, against the waves of the inferior impulses from within us. The cross means resisting against the assaults of these impulses, restraining from everything that tempts us with a momentarily pleasure, but with bad consequences for us and for others. The cross means patience in bearing some hardships and trials, which we cannot get rid of through hasty acts, but we allow them to us even more. The cross means the balance and the wisdom in the way of answering the unjust offences from others. The cross means, in one word, the self-control, that unites within it the wisdom, the force of the will, and the good intention in everything. The cross is action or restraint from an action, by having broad perspective of the connections of each moment we are placed in, with the future moments of our life with others' life.

The cross comprises in itself also a meaning of sufferance and the people often remain at this meaning of sufferance. But the cross means also sufferance only because it is also restraining from the voluptuousness of some pleasures which cause the decomposition of our being, from the sweetness of the

revenges which empoison our life, from the satisfaction of some blows given to other due to our envy, but which leave our being twisting in torment. If we reckon that these pleasures are mixed with poisons for ourselves, so that they will prove to be of short duration and shallow, being followed by painful remorse, of burdening helplessness, and by hard troubles, we will realize that the cross, by helping us to avoid them, it is not properly-saying causing sufferings, but it rather helps us getting rid of the sufferance difficult to cure, of the fallings, of the disarticulations prolonged sometimes into eternity, and it occasions us the elevation to the true joys.”⁶⁰⁸; and: “Lord Christ showed the painful presence of the cross to Him, but even more to the people, in His teary eyes. And the pain for those lost forever people, it hasn’t ceased since the death on cross, but it is always actual. This is said mysteriously by the Savior when He tells us that He won’t have the full joy to spiritually feats with the saved ones, but in the Kingdom of God (Matthew 22: 16).”⁶⁰⁹

The cross is defining for the way the Orthodox Christians receive Christ in their thoughts and in their hearts. Father Stăniloae affirms in this sense that:

“We cannot think and feel Christ without His pain, as a prolonged cross, for our sins. We cannot think Him impassible to us and not-living continuously, His cross, for us.”⁶¹⁰

The Church has the cross present in all its cultic activities, for the Church is the savior laboratory within which we are cleaned up of sins, we are sanctified, and we are saved. Thus:

⁶⁰⁸ Dumitru Stăniloae, “Crucea în teologia și cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe” („Cross in Theology and in the Cult of the Orthodox Church”), p. 417.

⁶⁰⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, “De ce și cum ne facem semnul crucii”, România Liberă, 25. 02. 1990.

⁶¹⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, “De ce și cum ne facem semnul crucii”, România Liberă, 25. 02. 1990.

“From our washing up of sins, it comes out also the practice of the Church of sanctifying, in its religious services and blessings, everything through the cross, on which Christ shed His blood and he continues to live always this feeling of His shedding.”⁶¹¹

Orthodox Christians mark themselves with the sign of the cross, in a symbolic gesture which accompanies all the cultic events, but also the events from the private life, for through this marking with the sign of the cross is solicited the presence and the work of the Holy Ghost, and it is also expressed the faith of the believers in His the help they will be surely provided with. Father Stăniloae shows that:

“(….) marking ourselves with the sign of the cross, with the three united fingers representing the Holy Trinity, and by thinking, when doing this sign, at Christ’s blood, that in that moment is washing us up, by shedding tears, with the benevolence of the Father and in the company of the Holy Ghost. By marking upon ourselves the sign of the cross we strive to imprint Christ in us, Who washes us up with His blood, with His pain for us. Let’s imprint - in our head as limb of thinking, in our heart as limb of feeling, in our hands as limbs of activity, starting with the right hand from the right shoulder, that means that through the right hand we start all our activities – Christ, Who washes us up of sins, and Who strengthens us against sins, in union with the Father and with the Holy Ghost. The initiative of thinking starts from the Father, and the Son brings it to the sacrifice though feeling and the Holy Ghost prolongs it in the practice of our life.”⁶¹²

The believer who wants to be saved, he must work the commandments of the Savior, Who showed that on the road to salvation, the cross is indispensable:

⁶¹¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, “De ce și cum ne facem semnul crucii”, România Liberă, 25. 02. 1990.

⁶¹² Dumitru Stăniloae, “De ce și cum ne facem semnul crucii” (“Why and How We Mark upon Ourselves the Sign of the Cross”), România Liberă (Free Romania Newspaper), 25. 02. 1990.

“And the one who doesn’t take his cross and doesn’t follow Me, he is not worthy of Me.”⁶¹³; “Sell everything you have and share to the poor ones, and you will have treasure in heavens; and come and follow Me”⁶¹⁴; “Go and sell everything you have and give to the poor ones, and you will have treasure in heavens; and then, by taking the cross, come and follow Me.”⁶¹⁵

IV. 4. Church’s Transparency in the Sacramental Life⁶¹⁶

Father Stăniloae tells us that being part of the Church it means to be part of the Body of Christ, to receive Christ as our Head. The Church is:

“(….) transparent to Christ. This transparency is a given and is a mission and is a duty.”⁶¹⁷

Church’s transparency to Christ it means that Church shows us Christ, that within Church, the ones who believe and work the faith, they see Christ. This transparency of the Church it means also that Christ can be seen in the Church’s believers, that He “enters” the believers and “dwells” in them.

Father Stăniloae shows that the name given to the Church in the New Testament, *εκκλεσια*⁶¹⁸:

“(….) designate the Church as the community of the ones called from world to Christ, or around Him”⁶¹⁹

⁶¹³ Matthew 10: 38. In KJB we have: “And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.”

⁶¹⁴ Luke 18: 22. In KJB we have: “Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me.”

⁶¹⁵ Mark 10: 21. In KJB we have: Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me.”

⁶¹⁶ Title taken from Dumitru Stăniloae, „Transparentă Bisericii în viața sacramentală” (“Church’s Transparency in the Sacramental Life”), *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 4, 1970.

⁶¹⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, “Transparentă Bisericii în viața sacramentală” (“Church’s Transparency in the Sacramental Life”)... p. 501.

⁶¹⁸ Greek language. In English language we have: ecclesia.

(...) “This community couldn’t be understood without Christ as its source of life and as the center of all its preoccupations. The ones who are part of it they live this concentrating their soul’s looks towards Christ. Their spiritual looks are aimed at Him, for they believe in Him as the Son of God embodied and resurrected, Who ensures them the eternal life and through this He gives a full meaning to their life.”⁶²⁰

The Church, this congregation of the believers, who gather together and officiate or participate to the religious cult in the name of Christ, it must maintain its quality of ladder towards heavens, towards salvation, where all believers must be urged to reach at. **The Church must avoid to be involved into the anarchical quarrel of the worldly, in order to not be later overwhelmed by the worldly:**

“A church within which it would weaken this concentrating of all the looks of the believers towards Christ, as their center, and these looks would be directed towards earthly purposes, it would weaken as Church, by becoming a society with a pronounced autonomous character. In the definition of the Church enters, as essential factor, its reference to Christ as its center.”⁶²¹

In order to remain savior, the Church must remain, in the first place, transparent to Christ, Whom it ought to have Him as Lord, and to Whom to sacrifice itself with all its soul, with all its heart, with all its power, and with all its thought. The Church must accumulate sacrificial attitude, and treasure in heavens, and all other things will be given to it, in addition:

“The Church, only because it forgets, to say so, of itself, and it essentially preoccupies itself with Christ, it is Church. The resemblance of the Church to a

⁶¹⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, “Transparența Bisericii în viața sacramentală” (“Church’s Transparency in the Sacramental Life”)... p. 501.

⁶²⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, “Transparența Bisericii în viața sacramentală” (“Church’s Transparency in the Sacramental Life”)... p. 502.

⁶²¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, “Transparența Bisericii în viața sacramentală” (“Church’s Transparency in the Sacramental Life”)... p. 502.

*bride of Christ, and of Him to its Bridegroom, it highlights, in the most accentuated manner, this essential and absorbing preoccupation of the Church with Christ, this continuous self-exceeding of the Church*⁶²²; *“The Church’s members are in the first place and essentially mastered by Christ, and only due to this fact they form the Church”*⁶²³; *“Not from being together, it results to be in Christ, but from being in the same Christ, it results to be together everywhere.”*⁶²⁴

Entering the communion with Christ cannot take place but within His Church. In the Holy Mysteries, the Church becomes transparent to Christ, and shows Him to believers. When we call Christ as Head of the Church, this means consequently that the Church is body of Christ, and the members of the Church are limbs of Christ’s Body. The believers become limbs of Christ’s Body through Baptism, through which they are: “together planted into Christ”⁶²⁵.

Father Stăniloae shows that within believers there is reflected Christ Who resurrected, but also Christ Who died on the cross:

*“(…) it is a participation of theirs, to His death, and to His resurrection”*⁶²⁶. *“(…) “Death, in its ethical aspect, is permanent in Him. He, as man, is in a state of continual surrender towards the Father and He irradiates this state within believers. And his state of resurrection implying such a spiritual-ethical state within Him, it irradiates this state of spiritual renewal also within believers.”*⁶²⁷

⁶²² Dumitru Stăniloae, “Transparentă Bisericii în viața sacramentală” (“Church’s Transparency in the Sacramental Life”)… p. 502.

⁶²³ Dumitru Stăniloae, “Transparentă Bisericii în viața sacramentală” (“Church’s Transparency in the Sacramental Life”)… p. 502.

⁶²⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, “Transparentă Bisericii în viața sacramentală” (“Church’s Transparency in the Sacramental Life”)… p. 502.

⁶²⁵ Dumitru Stăniloae, “Transparentă Bisericii în viața sacramentală” (“Church’s Transparency in the Sacramental Life”)… p. 502.

⁶²⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, “Transparentă Bisericii în viața sacramentală” (“Church’s Transparency in the Sacramental Life”)… p. 504.

⁶²⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, “Transparentă Bisericii în viața sacramentală” (“Church’s Transparency in the Sacramental Life”)… p. 504.

The death and the Resurrection of Christ, they are extended within believers through the sacramental activity of the Church, by changing their souls, by cleaning them up of sins, and making them by receiving the death and the resurrection of Lord Jesus Christ, to die also to the sins, and to resurrect to virtues.

At Baptism, as first Mystery of believer's initiation, of receiving him within the Church of Christ, there takes place the planting within believer:

*"(...) of the force of Christ's resurrection, that is not only an ethical force, but also and ontological one, a setting up the nature on the road of the resurrection by renewing the life. It is not an ethical force, but also an ontological one, for there is not expected only the effort of the man, but there is set a basis from above, for this effort, though this effort of the man it is also necessary."*⁶²⁸

Christ's death on cross wasn't due to the sin, for He was without sin, but His death was a total surrender to the Father, and consequently to Resurrection, Christ has elevated the man's nature - His human nature - on the right hand of the Father, showing the salvation and preparing the salvation to us.

Through Baptism, the believers receive, spiritually, a new image:

*"Their new image is the image of Christ imprinted within them and, through this, within Church."*⁶²⁹

The Church is, through its believers, transparent to Christ; respectively Christ is being seen in the virtuous living of the believers, in their Christian acts and deeds, in the manifestation of their love for the neighbor, in a word, in their living into Christ. The Church becomes transparent to Christ:

⁶²⁸ Dumitru Stăniloae, "Transparentă Bisericii în viața sacramentală" ("Church's Transparency in the Sacramental Life")... pp. 506-507.

⁶²⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, "Transparenta Bisericii în viața sacramentală" ("Church's Transparency in the Sacramental Life")... p. 508.

“(...) through the thinning of the human, that is though also death to the former man thickened through passions and lusts, there is a state of surrender to God and to the fellow humans, a happy sentiment of being absorbed, of sinking into God, a conscience that doesn’t know but about God, that overwhelmingly lives His kindness and His love, and their irradiation from the own human being. (...) The Church is transparent through the humbleness of the human from within it (...) The Church is transparent though the perseverance of its members of manifesting a spirit of (...) peace, of serving, of love amongst them, themselves and with all the people. The Church is transparent to Christ through the kindness, the decency, and the humanity of its members, that means the conscience of the own limits, and of the limitless power and kindness of God and of the value God endowed all the people with.”⁶³⁰

The more the “human” becomes increasingly “human”, by thinning of the thickness of the worldly from him, the more the believer, as part of the Church, but also the Church as totality of the believers, become more transparent to Christ.

The believers, as limbs of the Church, and the Church as totality of the believers, they become transparent to Christ by celebrating the Holy Mysteries within Church. In this sense, Father Stăniloae shows that:

*“The Eucharist (...) places in our depth **the image of the future life’s body**”*⁶³¹.

Within Church the believers are in communion amongst themselves and with Christ, Who leads them on the narrow path of the salvation, in His quality of Head of His Church. Father Stăniloae shows that Christ is present within Church, and within believers as limbs of His Church:

⁶³⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, “Transparenta Bisericii în viața sacramentală” (“Church’s Transparency in the Sacramental Life”)... p. 509.

⁶³¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, “Transparenta Bisericii în viața sacramentală” (“Church’s Transparency in the Sacramental Life”)... p. 510.

*“The Church is constituted and lives as an organic plurality of subjects, in marching towards death and towards resurrection, having within it, Christ as head and source of this movement, and in this sense being transparent to Christ.”*⁶³²

The Church is transparent:

*“(…) to the beauty of Christ, reflected through the Church.”*⁶³³

The Church has a universal character also because it promotes universal ethical and ontological values of the human, values which define the humanity towards which Christ urges the believers, a humanity that has been realized within Him, plenary and absolutely:

*“The light of the Church is the light of Christ reflected in it. Christ is the Light of the world through His teaching, but this is only because He is the Light itself through His Person and His example, His teaching not doing else but explaining His Person and His way of being.”*⁶³⁴

The universal symbol of Christ’s Church is His cross, through which the Church is defined as place of the fight, in communion, against sin, for saving the believers:

*“The cross elevated on the tops of the churchly places, humble though, it show to the entire world the direction towards heavens and the means to ascend to heavens: the death for the inferior and egotistic impulses, from the power of death of Christ.”*⁶³⁵

⁶³² Dumitru Stăniloae, “Transparenta Bisericii în viața sacramentală” (“Church’s Transparency in the Sacramental Life”)… p. 510.

⁶³³ Dumitru Stăniloae, “Transparenta Bisericii în viața sacramentală” (“Church’s Transparency in the Sacramental Life”)… p. 512.

⁶³⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, “Transparenta Bisericii în viața sacramentală” (“Church’s Transparency in the Sacramental Life”)… p. 515.

⁶³⁵ Dumitru Stăniloae, “Transparenta Bisericii în viața sacramentală” (“Church’s Transparency in the Sacramental Life”)… p. 515.

Father Stăniloae compares the transparency of Christ's Church for Christ, to a prism, through which, by passing the holy and sanctifying light of the Holy Trinity, light that is divided in the infinite nuances of the individualized salvation, for each believer individually, but it remains the same in its truth:

“Christ’s light overflows through this transparent prism that is the house of God. From this humble height and in the light that falls from heavens upon it - and through it this light overflows upon all things – the Church sees all things in their true meaning, and dressed up in this unitary and supreme meaning. This light embraces everybody, and through the Church itself, it embraces them in its interest and love for them all. Furthermore, the Church understands itself in connection with the entire world and with the world’s endeavors; it sees the beauty of the heavenly light only for it lightens the spiritual landscapes of the world, in continual enrichment through the human efforts. (...) The beauty of the Church highlights the beauty of the world, and it gains itself from the world’s continuous spiritual growing up and enriching. There is interdependency between Church and world, for God Himself by creating the world He made His revealing, dependent on the world, in its form accessible to the human spirit.”⁶³⁶

Father Stăniloae defines the Church as being savior also for:

“The Church, thought from ever in the plan of God referring to the world, it received its first foundation in the unity amongst humans and between them and God in Paradise. But this foundation, weakened through sin, it has been restored and perfected through Christ in Whom God has united Himself

⁶³⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, “Transparenta Bisericii în viața sacramentală” (“Church’s Transparency in the Sacramental Life”)... p. 515.

inseparably with the man, and He united all humans virtually in Himself.”⁶³⁷

We don't agree here the term *perfected*, because it would imply the feature of being imperfect, of the creation of God. Rather, Christ came to reveal within man, qualities placed there by God, but “forgotten” by man, consequently to the ancestral sin, in the same manner in which the people from today banish through sin, the grace received at the Holy Baptism, in the depths of their souls, where they are no longer able to “feel” it.

Church's transparency shows Christ to the ones who want to be saved, He being: “*The Way, the Truth, and the Life*”⁶³⁸. The transparency of the Church to Christ, it is savior to the believers.

⁶³⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, “Transparența Bisericii în viața sacramentală” (“Church's Transparency in the Sacramental Life”)... p. 515.

⁶³⁸ John 14: 6: ROB: “Jesus Said: I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Nobody comes to My Father, but through Me.”: KJB: “Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”

V. HUMAN BEING AS CHURCH AND THE HUMAN PERSON AS PRIEST OF THIS CHURCH⁶³⁹

When the believers come to Church for participating to the Holy Liturgy, they actualize and put in working their general priesthood received through the Mystery of the Baptism. Father Stăniloae shows that:

“Gathering of the human beings in the Church itself, it helps them to accomplish their priestly function in the frame of the cosmic creation, for through the Liturgy from the Church, they realize in their being, an explicit and conscious advancement towards God, Who is on the Holy Table from altar, and a spiritual advancement towards one another. But it is insufficient that the believer advances towards Christ from Altar, only within the churchly place, but the believer must become himself, a proper churchly place towards the priestly state – and in this quality, being him able to serve God, as priest, in the cosmic creation.”⁶⁴⁰

The believer's body must become, through cleanness and work, “temple of the Holy Ghost”, where the soul of the believer serves as a priest, glorifying God. The heart of the believer must become the altar where the epiclesis takes place, where the Most-Precious Body and the Most-Holy Blood of Christ, are continuously celebrated, and Christ becomes one with the believer, and the believer is in communion with Christ.

The communion at Liturgy is given by the fact that in the hearts of the present believers *“there is the same God Who is also in the hearts of the other believers”*⁶⁴¹. The fact that the believers open themselves to the Holy Ghost and to Christ, it determines the believers to open also to each other, having as environment the participation to the Holy Liturgy.

⁶³⁹ Taken from Dumitru Stăniloae, *Spiritualitate și comuniune în Liturgia Ortodoxă* (*Spirituality and Communion in the Orthodox Liturgy*), Publishing House of the Biblical and Missionary Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 2001.

⁶⁴⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Spiritualitate și comuniune în Liturgia Ortodoxă* (*Spirituality and Communion in the Orthodox Liturgy*)... p. 34.

⁶⁴¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Spiritualitate și comuniune în Liturgia Ortodoxă* (*Spirituality and Communion in the Orthodox Liturgy*)... p. 34.

Through Liturgy, the believers gathered together in the Church of Christ, they receive within them the infinity of the Holy Trinity, and they are being crossed in the infinity of the Holy Trinity, into salvation. Father Stăniloae affirms about infinite that:

“(...) it is the almighty foundation of the creation.”⁶⁴²

Describing the man as church of Christ, Father Stăniloae shows that:

“About the man as church, Mark the Ascetic wrote very clearly. The believer is also a church, actualized on the measure of his faith, within which he himself offers his gifts to Christ. But what is to be remarked, it is the fact that Saint Mark the Ascetic sees the priesthood of the human person closely tight and dependent on the central High Priesthood of Christ. It is what happens also in the Liturgy celebrated in the churchly place, where the One Who brings Himself as sacrifice, for being imparted with it the present ones, through the seen priest, is Christ, the unseen Hierarch.”⁶⁴³

But what could we give to Christ, as welcomed sacrifice in the church of our soul, and on the altar of our heart, as answer to His savior love? Behold what Father Stăniloae says about this:

“(...) He has given us the goods of the nature, and one to another, as gifts, (and, o. n.), but we have disregarded the duty of bringing these gifts and of bringing ourselves to God, and to one another.”⁶⁴⁴

⁶⁴² Dumitru Stăniloae, *Spiritualitate și comuniune în Liturghia Ortodoxă (Spirituality and Communion in the Orthodox Liturgy)*... p. 35.

⁶⁴³ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Spiritualitate și comuniune în Liturghia Ortodoxă (Spirituality and Communion in the Orthodox Liturgy)*... p. 36.

⁶⁴⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Spiritualitate și comuniune în Liturghia Ortodoxă (Spirituality and Communion in the Orthodox Liturgy)*... p. 36.

Behold then, what we must bring in the continual liturgy of the life, in faith, as gifts to God, into the Holy Ghost, and through the mediation of the Son: ourselves.

Quoting from Saint Cyril of Alexandria, Father Stăniloae gives a very concise definition to salvation, which we are paraphrasing it bellow:

“(to, o. n.) enter the Father, (...) so (to be us, o. n.) saved”⁶⁴⁵.

But for this **entering within Father**, for this coming back to the source we came from into the world, we must be permanently:

“(...) in state of clean sacrifice, overcoming any egotism.”⁶⁴⁶

The state of clean sacrifice is necessary to salvation, respectively to entering within Father:

“(...) we cannot achieve it but into Christ, the One Who received the cross for us, by renouncing to Himself. He takes us within Himself and presents us to the Father as clean sacrifice, source of all love.”⁶⁴⁷

Father Stăniloae shows that, when Christ mediates to the Father, for us, for our salvation, when He takes us into Himself to give us to the Father, He doesn't do this by disregarding our freedom – **He doesn't force us to walk the way of salvation**. And when he presents us to the Father, as clean sacrifice of love, He has the quality of Hierarch, and it remains us the quality of priest who officiates his own sacrifice.

⁶⁴⁵ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Spiritualitate și comuniune în Liturghia Ortodoxă (Spirituality and Communion in the Orthodox Liturgy)*... p. 36.

⁶⁴⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Spiritualitate și comuniune în Liturghia Ortodoxă (Spirituality and Communion in the Orthodox Liturgy)*... p. 36.

⁶⁴⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Spiritualitate și comuniune în Liturghia Ortodoxă (Spirituality and Communion in the Orthodox Liturgy)*... p. 36.

But what is that we must bring as sacrifice? Behold what the Psalmist says: “*sacrifice of God, the humble ghost, the broken and humble heart*”⁶⁴⁸, which „*God won’t curse it*”⁶⁴⁹.

Father Stăniloae speaks also about an “ordination” of ours, of the laymen, by Hierarch Christ, as priests, for Christ:

*“(…) founding, sustaining, and bringing to efficiency our priesthood through His High Priesthood, He makes Himself also our interior. Within this interior there is Christ as Hierarch of our inward church and together with Him we are also priests within it.”*⁶⁵⁰

Father Stăniloae quotes Saint Mark the Ascetic, who shows a concrete modality in which this altar, dedicated to Christ within us, it must function:

*“(…) we offer Christ, Who is in the interior of our heart as in an altar, all our thoughts from the first moment of their apparition, before being bitten by the beasts of the lust or of the power. Through these thoughts we live a life consecrated to Christ, but in connection with the outside world, so that is not deprived of sanctifying effect upon the external world.”*⁶⁵¹

Our betterment through cleanliness, our increasingly closeness to Christ, our increasingly full surrender to God, they extend the Kingdom of God within us, and through us within world. The world is bettered and transfigured through our faith and through our work, for bringing it as gift to the Creator.

The theme of the communion, of the unity realized by following the path of Christ, through the work of His Church, it is presented by Father Stăniloae like this:

⁶⁴⁸ Psalm 50: 18: “The sacrifice of God: the humble ghost; the broken and humble heart God won’t curse it.”; in KJB we have Psalm 51: “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.”

⁶⁴⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Spiritualitate și comuniune în Liturghia Ortodoxă (Spirituality and Communion in the Orthodox Liturgy)*... p. 36.

⁶⁵⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Spiritualitate și comuniune în Liturghia Ortodoxă (Spirituality and Communion in the Orthodox Liturgy)*... p. 37.

⁶⁵¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Spiritualitate și comuniune în Liturghia Ortodoxă (Spirituality and Communion in the Orthodox Liturgy)*... p. 37.

“Through this internal liturgy it is realized also within the church of our being the unification of all the movements and of the tendencies of the believer, amongst them and the one of God. And it helps, at its turn, the unification of each human being, with the other human being, into God⁶⁵², in his activity in the frame of the cosmic creation, intensifying the one from the churchly place in strict sense, on which, on the other hand, it is based. For a man not-unified in himself – unification that cannot be achieved but into God – he cannot unify himself also with the other humans.”⁶⁵³

Bringing our thoughts as welcomed sacrifices, to God, it presupposes these thoughts to be clean, respectively to represent the “*rationalities of God from within things*”⁶⁵⁴, showing that we are also, as source of these thoughts, clean of the passions which could pervert these thoughts.

Father Stăniloae says that Christ, in His quality of Hierarch of the church from within our hearts, He doesn’t have a passive attitude, only of receiving the sacrifice of love and of clean thoughts we are bringing to Him, but He also gives Himself to us by imparting us of Him:

“But the hierachal work of Christ from within our heart it is not restricted only to receiving our souls and our being itself, but it is also shown in an impartation of us by Him. This is because in any true love there takes place a reciprocal surrender. And the impartation is an act of reciprocal love between believer and Christ. (...) Into this the man lives the most untold mystery.”⁶⁵⁵ ⁶⁵⁶

⁶⁵² We believe that by remaining separated from our fellow humans, due to our egotism, we refuse that plan of God from ever, that one of unifying the whole deified creation in Him, and therefore we reject God. Therefore, by doing this, how could we be faithful to Him?

⁶⁵³ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Spiritualitate și comuniune în Liturghia Ortodoxă (Spirituality and Communion in the Orthodox Liturgy)*... p. 39.

⁶⁵⁴ Saint Maximos the Confessor, *Answer to the Ones Who Doubt the Holy Baptism*, PG 65, col. 996.

⁶⁵⁵ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Spiritualitate și comuniune în Liturghia Ortodoxă (Spirituality and Communion in the Orthodox Liturgy)*... p. 40.

Father Stăniloae shows that out of the holiness and of the cleanness of Christ, the ones imparted by Him, they receive the power of being cleaned and they are being cleaned on the measure they open themselves to this power of His:

“(...) for His blood is clean of any passion (of the soul), He gives also us, with this clean blood, His clean and eternally lasting life, united with the one of the Father, saving our life of all sickness of the sin, and strengthening us, when God wants us to continue living on earth, even bodily (I Cor. 11, 30).”⁶⁵⁷

Impartation of God is one of the unapproachable closeness, for the Being of God cannot be known by the human mind. The man can know – and this is only on the measure of his spiritual advancement – only the work of the uncreated energies. In this sense Father Staniloae shows that:

“Neither in the human dwelling place of God, nor in the cosmic one, neither in the liturgical one itself, the impartation of God it cannot reach to an end. In these dwelling places of God, by imparting ourselves of Him, we are experiencing His infinity. In all of them we meet the infinity, for being imparted of Him, we are realizing that His life infinitely exceeds what we are able to receive. And this sustains our thirst of receiving increasingly more from Him.”^{658 659}

⁶⁵⁶ Father Stăniloae quotes Patriarch Kallistos: “When the mind sees Christ in the true unitary manner (crossing over the multitude of the clean rationalities of the things surrendered to Him (Father Stăniloae’s note)), it is the time to be silent (Ecclesiastes 3: 7 (this book is not present in KJB, o. n.)). This is because, this is the time when one drinks the godlike nectar of the joy and of the spiritual gladness; it is the time of the mysterious views and of impartation with the things from above nature. Actually, the mind sees then the chalice in Lord’s hand, full with the wine of **unmixed mixing** (of godhead and of humanity unmixed united in the person, therefore also in the blood of Christ (Father Stăniloae’s note)). (We are noticing here a very beautiful oxymoron: “the unmixed mixing”, o. n.).

⁶⁵⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Spiritualitate și comuniune în Liturghia Ortodoxă (Spirituality and Communion in the Orthodox Liturgy)*... p. 41.

⁶⁵⁸ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Spiritualitate și comuniune în Liturghia Ortodoxă (Spirituality and Communion in the Orthodox Liturgy)*... p. 42.

Father Stăniloae, from the height of the spiritualization of his holiness, he shows that one of the shortcomings of the Christian theology is that of not clarifying enough how the deification of the creation takes place by bringing it to the state of full union with God:

*“If the advancement of the creation as whole towards consummation, during present time, it is not so clear in the Christian teaching, being given the end we must cross through, for reaching a consummation into God, or to a total abolishment of the distance to God, the same teaching gives, as fully clear fact, our consummation in the life to come.”*⁶⁶⁰

The man must bring as sacrifice his personal effort of spiritualization by working the commandments and the good deeds, but this effort doesn't take place in an isolated manner, and it becomes efficient when it takes place in the communion of the Church.

“The personal liturgy of the man” it takes place in the harmony of the liturgy officiated within the entire creation:

*“(...) this personal liturgy, the believer doesn't do it separated from the cosmic creation and from the human community. The stage of cleaning of passions and of habituation to the virtues, which culminates in love, and of knowing God from creation, from his self and from his fellow humans, it takes place not only through the connection with God, through faith and prayer, but also by fulfilling the duties towards other fellow humans, through his work upon creation.”*⁶⁶¹

⁶⁵⁹ Father Staniloae quotes verses from Saint John the New Theologian, which express the thirst of being imparted by Christ, like this: “(...) it seems to me I'm not drinking at all // Though the whole water is in my mouth // for I want to have everything, // I am always like a beggar, // When I really own everything, // By being united with the little that I'm drinking”.

⁶⁶⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Spiritualitate și comuniune în Liturghia Ortodoxă (Spirituality and Communion in the Orthodox Liturgy)*... p. 43.

⁶⁶¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Spiritualitate și comuniune în Liturghia Ortodoxă (Spirituality and Communion in the Orthodox Liturgy)*... p. 43.

Father Stăniloae highlights the place of the family, as foreground of the savior action of the believer, upon his fellow humans and upon creation. **It is to be remarked here the eschatological and soteriological vision Father Stăniloae has upon family:**

*“But amongst the person and the cosmic creation and his fellow humans, in the first place there is his family. This is because advancing towards God isn’t an exclusive privilege of the monks (besides, also these ones have the monastic congregation as family). Thus, the human person has the duty to make also of his house, a dwelling place of God, through which to advance towards the union with Christ, or in a liturgy that bring him increasingly close to Him.”*⁶⁶²

The liturgy of the family’s life it consists of living, by its members, a Christian life, which to put in practice the Christian teaching:

*“Family’s members are asked to give on this purpose, firstly, a reciprocal aid. They are asked to forgive to each other the mistakes they commit as human beings, to urge themselves, with the word and with the example, to avoid ugly things, to help each other in good things, to take care of each other and to urge each other, with the example, to prayer.”*⁶⁶³

Behold how Father Stăniloae shows that salvation takes place in the three churches, which all of them must give themselves to Christ, to be Him altars where, in His quality of cosmic Hierarch, to be Him present and to officiate the Liturgy together with the believers: in the Church as place of praying, in the small church of the family through the practical liturgy of working the good deeds, and in the internal church of the man by self-sacrificing himself and by surrendering to the clean love of God.

⁶⁶² Dumitru Stăniloae, *Spiritualitate și comuniune în Liturghia Ortodoxă (Spirituality and Communion in the Orthodox Liturgy)*, 2001, p. 44.

⁶⁶³ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Spiritualitate și comuniune în Liturghia Ortodoxă (Spirituality and Communion in the Orthodox Liturgy)*, 2001, p. 44.

VI. COMMUNION AND LOVE – SALVATION’S WAYS

VI. 1. Community through Love⁶⁶⁴

When Father Stăniloae teaches us about salvation, no matter the theme approached in his writings, he constantly utters the fundamental truth of the Christendom, formulated by Saint Cyprian, according to which:

“(...) outside Church there is no salvation.”⁶⁶⁵

And how could be otherwise, for if we believe that within Church and through Church, Christ is present and works through the Holy Ghost, where could we search for salvation elsewhere, but within Church, where the Source of the salvation Is?

For illustrating the prayer in communion and in the community of the Church, Father Dumitru Stăniloae quotes from Homiakov: *“The Church prays for everybody and everybody prays for everybody, but our prayer must be a true expression of love, not only a prayer in words. But because we cannot love everybody, we pray for those ones whom we love, and our prayer mustn’t be hypocritical; but we ask God to give us the possibility to love everybody and to pray non-hypocritically, for everybody... The true prayer is love”⁶⁶⁶.*

Father Stăniloae shows that the most defining characteristic of the Church is that of communion (catholicity, in Greek language, congregationalism, from Slavonic) and says about this characteristic, the fact that:

“(...) it is the most defining element of it, and the most efficient one in the work of salvation”⁶⁶⁷; “an essential condition of our salvation.”⁶⁶⁸

⁶⁶⁴ Title taken from Dumitru Stăniloae, “Comunitate prin iubire” (“Community through Love”), *Orthodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, no. 1 / 1963.

⁶⁶⁵ Dumitru Stăniloae, “Comunitate prin iubire” (“Community through Love”)... p. 52.

⁶⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 53. Father Stăniloae quotes here from the work: *Die Einheit der Kirche*, în „Östchliches Christentum. Dokumente”. Herausgegeben von Nikolai v. Bubnoff und Hand Ehrenberg. II Philosophie. C. H. Becksche Verlagsbuch-handlung, München, 1925, p. 21-24.

⁶⁶⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, “Comunitate prin iubire” (“Community through Love”)... p. 54.

⁶⁶⁸ Dumitru Stăniloae, “Comunitate prin iubire” (“Community through Love”)... p. 54.

Father Stăniloae urges us to not remain in that pharisaical posture of theorizing the communion, but to come and realize this communion with the deed, within Church, this being the way on which we can advance towards salvation:

*“Our Church has as potential the conditions of a perfect communion, and each time there are believers to take seriously their calling as Christians, they actualize these conditions. This is because in spiritual things, in the things in which the will has also an important role, on one hand everything is given, on the other hand everything is realized. And only on the measure we realize them, we know them by experiencing them (“by working them”, as the old translators of the spiritual books say) (...) The Church, on one hand, it is a perfect given, a perfect communion, on the other hand it is our mission to realize it as such a communion.”*⁶⁶⁹

It does not suffice, shows Father Stăniloae, to claim, to verbally declare, theoretically, our Orthodoxy, but we must put it in practice in the daily communion life:

*“We accentuate very much the “Orthodoxy” of the Church, but by doing this we highlight only the premises, accepted by us with the mind, of the life in communion. But we ceaselessly remain outside the request of fulfilling, practically and in a multiple manner, the claimed «Orthodoxy», the truth of the faith, the given of the Revelation and of the Tradition, in an always unfinished plenitude of the communion, namely the mission of developing our work increasingly as the divine given for us.”*⁶⁷⁰

Behold how Father Stăniloae expresses the commandment of God for communion:

⁶⁶⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, “Comunitate prin iubire” (“Community through Love”)... p. 54.

⁶⁷⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, “Comunitate prin iubire” (“Community through Love”)... p. 54.

“(...) God asks us to shows our love towards all people, amongst all people.”⁶⁷¹

We consider the participation of the Church to the life of the human society as essential, because the isolation would lead to disappearance of the Church in time. The Church is for man and not the man is for the Church. In the same spirit the Savior tells us: “And He was telling them: the Saturday has been created for man and not the man for Saturday”⁶⁷², because otherwise one falls in excesses as the ones of the Inquisition, or of the Missionary Catholicism, which destroyed whole civilizations all over South America, and now accept, for the sake of expansion with all costs, the mixing of the so-called local faiths (obviously pagan) with the Christendom, in a dizzying and syncretic mélange, and, we believe, by no means savior. But, involving in the temporary things must not lower the Church too much in immanent, its connection with God remaining in this case only a theoretical one, an intellectual one; neither must the Church involve itself in the quarrel of the worldly. Behold how Father Stăniloae describes the participation of the Church to society:

“The Church never understood that it must lock its believers up in a communion preoccupied exclusively with the problems of faith, but because these ones are also real human beings, it wants to contribute to their growing up toward becoming useful factors of the human community opened to broad life, preoccupied with all the problems of the existence. Between the community life of the believers within Church, and their life in community with all people, with the multiple plans of the concrete existence, there must be a report of communicating vessels.”⁶⁷³

Expressing the necessity of the communion is a constant preoccupation in Father Stăniloae's theology, he seeing an

⁶⁷¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, “Comunitate prin iubire” (“Community through Love”)... p. 55.

⁶⁷² Mark 2: 27. In KJB we have: “And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath.”

⁶⁷³ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Comunitate prin iubire” (“Community through Love”)... p. 55.

intrinsic connection between communion and the capacity of the believers to be limbs of the Truth:

*“Where the communion is absent there reigns the lie, the shield under which, an individual always hides himself from another. The integration of the individuals in a real unity, in a coagulated community, it is proven through the fact that they tell the truth into love, for reciprocal building up.”*⁶⁷⁴

Father Stăniloae expresses the faith of his holiness in the savior character of the fact of showing somebody his mistakes, for otherwise:

*“Overlooking the bad deeds of somebody it creates insincere reports, of hypocrisy, of secretly gossiping, it let the evil to grow up, it weakens the connection of love between the community’s members.”*⁶⁷⁵

We see here a great difficulty in harmonizing, the affirmations of Father Stăniloae, to the commandments: “*Do not judge, to not be judged!*”⁶⁷⁶, as also to the advice of a great Father of the Wilderness: “*If you are unable to not think at that, at least do not tell it, and if you cannot keep your silence on that, at least do not do it!*” We deduce from here the insurmountable difficulties the priests who are spiritual guide must face, difficulties which cannot be overcome but with the help of the Holy Ghost present at the Mystery of the Confession.

Father Stăniloae brings historical arguments, from the evolution of the Church, which attests the fact that rich people’s entering the Church caused the occurrence of the division and he draws the following conclusion:

*“The main cause of weakening the communion amongst believers was adhering to the material goods (...)”*⁶⁷⁷

⁶⁷⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, “Comunitate prin iubire” (“Community through Love”)... p. 56.

⁶⁷⁵ Dumitru Stăniloae, “Comunitate prin iubire” (“Community through Love”)... p. 56.

⁶⁷⁶ Matthew 7: 1. In KJB we have: “Judge not, that ye be not judged.”

⁶⁷⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Comunitate prin iubire” (“Community through Love”)... pp. 57-58.

Behold how Father Stăniloae describes the social individualism, as presented in the 20th Century's novels:

“(...) any rising of an individual to a special economical and social situation, it is done against society, in despise for it, and the society, if it can, it opposes him by all means, and when it can't, it adulates him, but hypocritically, laying in wait for a moment of weakening of the one who has elevated himself, to hit him on the head⁶⁷⁸. Society is composed of individuals reciprocally laying wait, trying to deceive, to exploit each other. Those individuals, though, have a common body, when emerges one stronger than they all are.”⁶⁷⁹

VI. 2. Church – in the Sense of Place of Wide Community with Christ⁶⁸⁰

In Romanian language, says Father Stăniloae, the word Church it comes *Basilica*, meaning the house of the Emperor Christ. And Ecclesia: “(...) is the group, or the totality of the ones called by Christ, to live into Him”⁶⁸¹:

“The calling has been made through the power of the grace (Galileans 1: 6, 15), through an attraction from above nature, exercised upon man. It is produces from the power of Christ and the called ones receive through calling the «promise of the eternal inheritance» (Hebrews 9: 15). But we reach at the fulfillment of this promise by running towards it as towards our final target, which is through this also a reward for the effort asked us since the calling (Philippians 3: 15) (...) Behold therefore, that the

⁶⁷⁸ We have here one of the very rare examples of Father Stăniloae using the colloquial language, but in this case he choose to do so for creating a big impression upon reader and for expressing as closely as possible the described phenomenon.

⁶⁷⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Comunitate prin iubire” (“Community through Love”)... p. 59.

⁶⁸⁰ Title taken from Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica în sensul locaș și de largă comuniune cu Hristos” (“Church – in Sense of Dwelling Place of Wide Community with Christ”), *Ortodoxia*, no. 3 / 1982.

⁶⁸¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica în sensul locaș și de largă de largă comuniune cu Hristos” (“Church – in Sense of Dwelling Place of Wide Community with Christ”)... p. 337.

Greek-Latin term of ecclesia implies in itself the presence and the grace of Christ. And, though it doesn't refer directly to the Church in sense of communion, it has been extended since the times of the New Testament in the sense of dwelling place.”⁶⁸²

Father Stăniloae shows that by uttering the word *Church*:

“Just as Saint Apostle Paul did, likewise the Christians from today, (...) they presuppose the presence and the work of Lord Jesus Christ in it, either they speak about the churchly dwelling where, the local community of the ones who have the same faith, gathers in, or about the wide and continual churchly communion.”⁶⁸³

The work of Christ within Church is His continuous sacrifice He brings to the Father, for people's salvation. Christ's sacrifice keeps the Church together (in unity):

“If Christ wouldn't bring Himself as sacrifice in the churchly dwellings, if there wouldn't be imparted, through these dwelling place, His body and blood sacrificed, and through the grace of all the Mysteries, to the community's members from each churchly dwelling, He would not be present and working within the large churchly communion.”⁶⁸⁴

The Church mustn't be thought outside its Head, Christ. Father Stăniloae shows that:

“(...) we see, as Saint Paul did, that neither the community can be separated from the churchly dwelling place, or the churchly dwelling place from community, and both of them from the wide churchly

⁶⁸² Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica în sensul locaș și de largă de largă comuniune cu Hristos” (“Church – in Sense of Dwelling Place of Wide Community with Christ”)... p. 337.

⁶⁸³ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica în sensul locaș și de largă de largă comuniune cu Hristos” (“Church – in Sense of Dwelling Place of Wide Community with Christ”)... p. 338.

⁶⁸⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica în sensul locaș și de largă de largă comuniune cu Hristos” (“Church – in Sense of Dwelling Place of Wide Community with Christ”)... p. 337.

communion. This is because in all applying, the Church has Christ as its life, starting from the united communion with Christ within the churchly dwelling place.”⁶⁸⁵

The savior character of the Church resides in the fulness of its truth. Diminishing, no matter how little, the fulness of the truth, eliminating, due to our vain glory, some aspects we do not agree with, the trying to receive the Revelation partially, aren't savior at all. **Christ is where He calls us, and not where we think we force Him to come; Christ is in His Church. We receive Christ whole, or we don't receive Him at all.** Father Stăniloae shows, referring to the ones who leave the Church of Christ, by searching for Him elsewhere, the fact that:

*“Christian denominations have forsaken the word church for the churchly dwelling place, not only as name, but also in that sense implying the presence of Christ within this churchly dwelling place. This is because they have forsaken the faith that they receive Christ in Mysteries, that the Mysteries are the means through which He imparts Himself to the community, in a churchly dwelling place or in another. They have replaced the church for “gathering house”, role that any house can have it. Christ is no longer present, for them, in the churchly dwelling place than in any other house, or in any other place, since He is no longer imparted through Mysteries. To these denominations, neither the “house” is any longer church for Christ is no longer in it in a special manner, nor the “gathering” is church any longer for it is no longer imparted with Christ in “the gathering house.”*⁶⁸⁶

And even more than that:

⁶⁸⁵ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica în sensul locaș și de largă de largă comuniune cu Hristos” (“Church – in Sense of Dwelling Place of Wide Community with Christ”)... p. 337.

⁶⁸⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica în sensul locaș și de largă de largă comuniune cu Hristos” (“Church – in Sense of Dwelling Place of Wide Community with Christ”)... pp. 339-339.

“Some of these denominations have lost the Christological meaning of the Church and they disregard the salvation brought by Christ through resurrection and communicated us through Mysteries. When they see the right-worshippers into Christ, entering the Church, they say that these worshippers enter an idolatrous temple, because they who say this, they do not believe in the Eucharistic presence of Christ in the church. In reality they are the ones who enter their “gathering house” as any house, because they no longer have Christ in it.”⁶⁸⁷

Christ, at the Last Supper, He institutes the Mystery of the Eucharist and the Holy Impartation, and He asks His disciples to officiate it in His remembrance, by commanding them: *“you do so”*. Related to this Father Stăniloae shows the fact that the commandment of the Savior is addressed to the community of the apostles:

*“And the plural⁶⁸⁸ *“you do it”* has two meanings: a) to be done by each apostle and by his descendants: b) but to be done by them having around themselves a community, as the disciples of Christ were around Christ, all together, and not in isolation.”⁶⁸⁹*

The priest and the bishop, in the presence of the Synaxis (the assembly of the believers), by officiating the Mystery of the Eucharist, they have the godlike dignity of mediating the coming of Christ and of the Holy Ghost within Church, upon believers. Thus, the priest or the bishops, says Father Stăniloae:

“(…) he is invested only with the power of occasioning through his prayer, as Christ did, the transformation of the bread and of the wine in the body and in the blood of Christ and of imparting these to the believers, but not of transforming himself

⁶⁸⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica în sensul locaș și de largă de largă comuniune cu Hristos” (“Church – in Sense of Dwelling Place of Wide Community with Christ”)... p. 339.

⁶⁸⁸ This *plural* isn't obvious in English language.

⁶⁸⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica în sensul locaș și de largă de largă comuniune cu Hristos” (“Church – in Sense of Dwelling Place of Wide Community with Christ”)... p. 339.

into these ones, as Christ did. And in the moment of his impartation, he passes from the unique role of officiator of the Mystery, or of representative, on some measure, of Christ, in that one of receiver of Christ, as also the other believers.”⁶⁹⁰

“His role (of the priest, o. n.), it is reduced only to the one of visible organ through whom Christ Himself transforms, in an unseen manner, the bread and the wine in the His body and blood, or through whom Christ Himself brings Himself as sacrifice, and not somebody else (...)”⁶⁹¹

Father Stăniloae shows three absolutely necessary conditions, for the believers from a locality to have the possibility to be imparted with the body and with the blood of Christ, which are the followings:

“(...) a churchly dwelling place, an altar, and a holy table. And for the sacrifice of Christ took place on the cross, the memory of Christ as real meeting with Him in state of sacrifice it is concretized as accompanied by the sign of the cross (...)”⁶⁹²

Concerning the Church of Christ, Church that was «embodied» and «it still is being embodied», through the embodiment of Christ in His believers, Father Stăniloae shows that it was prefigured since the Old Testament, but it becomes obvious as creation of Christ, in His quality of Word of God, Who comes within world for offering salvation to the entire creation, by turning it back to its Creator:

“(...) Church’s Fathers saw, in the model of the tent from Sinai, a model either of the Christian churchly dwelling place (...) or of the universal Church. But they saw in this tent from Sinai, in the same time, also a spiritual prefiguring of the godlike Word

⁶⁹⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica în sensul locaș și de largă de largă comuniune cu Hristos” (“Church – in Sense of Dwelling Place of Wide Community with Christ”)... p. 340.

⁶⁹¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica în sensul locaș și de largă de largă comuniune cu Hristos” (“Church – in Sense of Dwelling Place of Wide Community with Christ”)... p. 340.

⁶⁹² Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica în sensul locaș și de largă de largă comuniune cu Hristos” (“Church – in Sense of Dwelling Place of Wide Community with Christ”)... p. 340.

*Himself, in Whom there are comprised before creation the images of all creatures, and after creation and Christ's work of salvation, the creatures themselves gathered into Him.*⁶⁹³

Each time we speak about the Church of Christ, we mustn't forget even for a moment, that the Church isn't only "what one can see" on earth, but it has also its holy part, formed by the angels of the Lord and by His saints. In this sense, Father Stăniloae quotes Eusebius of Caesarea, who speaks us about the earthly Church as: "*the seen presentation of the unseen Church (X, 4, 21)*"⁶⁹⁴.

We could say that the Church of God existed since Genesis, for God has permanently been within His creation, even if the power of the human being, of perceiving Him, before Christ, was much reduced. But, after the Embodiment of Christ, the calling to salvation, the calling to coming and to self-giving and to deification, it receives a new intensity. Father Stăniloae shows that:

*"God the Word, He engulfs all of us, as a general churchly dwelling place. He comprises all of us, since even before His embodiment, sacrifice, and resurrection. The tent from Sinai is the not-embodied tent in Which there are comprised all things, as in a dwelling place of the entire creation, for the creation is not separated from God, from the Word, through Whom all the seen and the unseen things have been created."*⁶⁹⁵

We remark here, referring to the saying from above, the fact that Father Stăniloae completes what ecclesiology usually affirms, namely the Church is constituted through Embodiment, the holy life of the Savior within world, Crucifixion and death, Resurrection, Ascent to heavens, and the Descent of the Holy Ghost. From the saying from above it

⁶⁹³ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica în sensul locaș și de largă de largă comuniune cu Hristos” (“Church – in Sense of Dwelling Place of Wide Community with Christ”)... p. 340.

⁶⁹⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica în sensul locaș și de largă de largă comuniune cu Hristos” (“Church – in Sense of Dwelling Place Place of Wide Community with Christ”)... p. 341.

⁶⁹⁵ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica în sensul locaș și de largă de largă comuniune cu Hristos” (“Church – in Sense of Dwelling Place of Wide Community with Christ”)... p. 341.

turns out the fact that at Genesis, God builds His Church, in the three acceptations Father Stăniloae gives to the word Church, respectively: the creation as universal Church, the family as Church, and the man as Church; and God is permanently present in this Church of His, which He never forsakes.

The coming of Christ God isn't an accidental phenomenon, or a phenomenon of "despair" due to the fact that God risks to fail His creation and the man, but it is the continuation of the plan from ever of God, of saving the creation and the man, through which He becomes increasingly closer and increasingly seen, by increasingly deifying all things, through His ever closer coming:

*"Two are the purposes God the Word aims with the creatures He comprises in Himself as a tent: a) to bring them to unity and b) to imprint them the disposition of sacrifice. The first purpose couldn't be accomplished without the second one. Who doesn't renounce to himself by giving himself to God and to his fellow humans, he cannot realize the unity between himself, God, and the other people. That's why, the tent of the Old Testament, as symbolically prefiguring Christ, it was not only the point of unity for the entire people of Israel, but also a place for sacrifices for all the members of this people."*⁶⁹⁶

A salvation's symptom is the communion amongst believers that is realized within Church but also continues within world, a communion that, on one hand, it brings everybody into Christ, and on the other hand, it is realized through the presence of Christ within them:

"(...) impartation of the same Christ, sacrificed for us, it realizes a maximum unity amongst them, not only by the fact that they all receive the same body and blood he has, but by the fact that through this it is strengthened within them the mood towards

⁶⁹⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica în sensul locaș și de largă de largă comuniune cu Hristos” (“Church – in Sense of Dwelling Place of Wide Community with Christ”)... p. 342.

sacrifice, of forsaking egotism, of surrendering themselves to God, and to their fellow humans.”⁶⁹⁷

The ones who believe in Christ, they must die to the sin, and they take this power from the power of Christ’s death. Dying to the sin, the Christians die to themselves, and they give themselves towards the eternal life into Christ. Father Stăniloae shows that the Christians must be:

“(...) **dying to themselves, by the power of the Christ’s death.**”⁶⁹⁸

Behold how Father Stăniloae describes the mode the communion of the all Christian believers and of the churches / Christian dwelling places it is realized in:

*“By being imparted of the same Christ, in His permanent state of sacrifice, it is overcome not only the separation amongst the members of the community from within a certain churchly dwelling place, but amongst all the communities which are in diverse churchly dwelling places, within which it is confesses the same right and integral faith into Christ. (...) All the members are united in the same Christ, Who is **the not-spatial foundation of the space.** And even if within the diverse churchly dwelling places the believers are not imparted in the same time, they overcome even the time, for Christ by Whom they are imparted, He is forever in the state of sacrifice in which He imparts Himself to them (...)”*⁶⁹⁹

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The Christians do not withdraw themselves from the dialogue with the world, because by doing that they would

⁶⁹⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica în sensul locaș și de largă de largă comuniune cu Hristos” (“Church – in Sense of Dwelling Place of Wide Community with Christ”)... p. 342.

⁶⁹⁸ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica în sensul locaș și de largă de largă comuniune cu Hristos” (“Church – in Sense of Dwelling Place of Wide Community with Christ”)... p. 343.

⁶⁹⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica în sensul locaș și de largă de largă comuniune cu Hristos” (“Church – in Sense of Dwelling Place of Wide Community with Christ”)... p. 343.

⁷⁰⁰ In the text quoted by Father Stăniloae, there is an oxymoron: “the non-spatial foundation of the space”, with profound possibilities of theological developments.

withdraw themselves from their task of deifying the creation. **But by living into Christ and within His Church, though being in time and space, they live in a supra-temporal and supra-spatial.** Although the time flows over them and they are defined within space, the ones who live in Christ are connected to Godhead, by foretasting the eternity. **Christians have this acute conscience that their deeds committed within history have eternal repercussions:**

“Actually, this overcoming of the space and of the time it is not forgetting about our life within space and time, but elevating our life in the non-passing plan that is opened to the universal. Our responsibilities imposed by our own space and time, and fulfilled or not fulfilled within these space and time, they become responsibilities with eternal repercussions for all of us.”⁷⁰¹

Father Stăniloae, advancing on the line of the vision that entire creation is a Church, and that entire cosmos is a Church, he sees the sacrifice of Christ as the element of the cohesion of the entire creation into God:

*“In the sense of uniting everybody with the Same Christ in His permanent state of sacrifice, elevated with the depth of our beings beyond space and time, one speaks about a **heavenly Liturgy**, that takes a visible image in the liturgies from diverse churches. And the eternity and the non-spatiality we are elevated within, they are not emptied of the consequences of our life, as Christ as Man elevates into eternity and non-spatiality the lived «memory» of His sacrifice. As such, the sacrificed Christ coexists with us all the time and in all space we live within, or in another sense, by making us partakers to the eternity and to the non-spatiality of His state of sacrifice.”⁷⁰²*

⁷⁰¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica în sensul locaș și de largă de largă comuniune cu Hristos” (“Church – in Sense of Dwelling Place of Wide Community with Christ”)... pp. 343-344.

⁷⁰² Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica în sensul locaș și de largă de largă comuniune cu Hristos” (“Church – in Sense of Dwelling Place of Wide Community with Christ”)... p. 344.

The Holy Liturgy is the element of cohesion that ties the seen part of the creation to the unseen part of it. At cosmic level Christ the Hierarch celebrates the Liturgy that gives unity to the entire creation:

“(...) through Liturgy Christ connects heavens to earth. Through Liturgy the Son of God, made Man, sacrificed, resurrected, and ascended, He brings us along history, all of us who want to, towards the Father, where He ascended to. For He ascended to the Father not because He lives there separated from us, but for drawing us also to the Father.”⁷⁰³

Christ, as Father Stăniloae shows, celebrates the cosmic Liturgy by permanently being in state of sacrifice, and the believers enter the salvation, in the unity of His Church, through His sacrifice:

“But if all of us enter to the Father through His embodied and sacrificed Son, we all find, in the same time, our unity with Him in state of sacrifice. On this way, all the ones who are imparted of Him in all churches of the same right faith, they form the unity of the Church as universal communion of the ones who believe in Him.”⁷⁰⁴

The bread and the wine are taken from creation, but they are being transformed by the descent of the Holy Ghost, in the Most-Precious Body and in the Most-Holy Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, towards the glory of God the Father. Behold how, through Liturgy, the creation is brought back to its Creator, and the Liturgy “connects heavens and earth”⁷⁰⁵:

“And the bread and the wine brought by believers, in the succession of the time, for being transformed in the body and in the blood of the Lord, they are in the

⁷⁰³ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica în sensul locaș și de largă de largă comuniune cu Hristos” (“Church – in Sense of Dwelling Place of Wide Community with Christ”)... p. 344.

⁷⁰⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica în sensul locaș și de largă de largă comuniune cu Hristos” (“Church – in Sense of Dwelling Place of Wide Community with Christ”)... p. 345.

⁷⁰⁵ Vid supra, footnote no. 674.

same time the whole creation, as gift from God, and in solidarity with the creation, and our human being, turned back, as our gift, to God, being united together with ourselves, with the Only Begotten and Embodied Son of the Father. Thus, all of us become united with the given to us creation, as sons of the Father, united with the Son, and amongst us. This work of uniting us with the Son and amongst us, and through Him with the Father, it is being done in churchly dwelling places, which, though many, they do not separate us, but neither they confound us, so as the members of a community from each churchly dwelling place are not separated, neither confounded, but united in the Same Christ and with the Same Father.”⁷⁰⁶

⁷⁰⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Biserica în sensul locaș și de largă de largă comuniune cu Hristos” (“Church – in Sense of Dwelling Place of Wide Community with Christ”)... p. 346.

VII. MAN'S SALVATION WITHIN CHURCH - ITS MEANINGS, STAGES, AND CONDITIONS

Entire work of God, concretized in Genesis and by creating the man, it has as purpose from ever, the salvation of the man and of the creation, namely their turning back, deified, in the bosom of their Creator. Father Stăniloae shows that:

*“The main term used by the Holy Scripture and by the Church’s Tradition for the purpose and for the result of the Christ’s work regarding the man is that of «salvation».”*⁷⁰⁷

Church’s dogmas also set forth that Christ God comes within world for restoring the man, for making him again able to receive God the Father, therefore to save the man. Father Stăniloae mentions that:

*“In the Nicaea-Constantinopolitan Creed, the Church confesses that God’s Son embodied Himself, and He was crucified, and He resurrected, and ascended to heavens, and He sits on the right hand of the Father, «for us the human beings and for our salvation». As fulfiller of this work, Jesus Christ bears the appellative «the Savior», the most frequent appellative next to the one of «the Lord». Even the name «Jesus» it means «the Savior».”*⁷⁰⁸

Salvation is a process the man voluntarily involves himself in, in full freedom, but during which the man is sustained by the Holy Ghost and by Christ, process that takes place within Church, in communion with the other believers. Through salvation we are given, says Father Stăniloae, the

⁷⁰⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă / B. Mântuirea omului în Biserică, înțelesurile, etapele și condițiile ei (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology / B. The Salvation of the Man within Church, Its Meanings, Stages, and Conditions)*, Publishing House of the Missionary and Biblical Institute of the Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 1997, p. 156.

⁷⁰⁸ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)...* p. 156.

reaching at: "its final stage: the resurrection and the eternal life."⁷⁰⁹

Father Stăniloae shows that salvation was, during time, a central theme of theology, and how could be it otherwise, whether we consider it as finality of the plan of God from ever. Salvation's theme is pervasive at all Church's Fathers, and these ones show us that salvation, as process, has certain phases. Father Stăniloae shows us regarding this fact that:

"(...) about the phases of the salvation the holy apostles speak like this: Behold some of the terms: dying with Christ to the sin and the earnest of the resurrection and of the eternal life (Romans 6: 4-5; 8: 11, 12; Colossians 3: 1), «destruction of the sin's body» and «liberation from its slavery» (Romans 6: 6-7), the «true» life into Christ for God (Romans 6: 10; Galileans 2: 20; Philippians 1: 21), the life into «holiness» (Romans 6: 19, 22; Colossians 1: 22), Christ's dwelling and the dwelling of the Holy Ghost in the saved one (Romans 8: 9, 10, 11; I Corinthians 3: 17; 6: 19), the state of sons of God (Romans 8: 14, 16, 17, 23; Galileans 4: 7); the perspective of being glorified into Christ (Romans 8, 18, 21), imprinting the image of Christ into the saved ones, the resemblance to the Son of God (Romans 8: 29; Galileans 4: 7; 3: 27), dressing up into Christ (Romans 8: 4), walking into the renewal of the life (Romans 4: 4), living into the Ghost, walking into the Ghost (Galileans 5: 24), quality of limbs of Christ, taking part to His body (I Corinthians 12: 27), comprising in the clay pot of the body, of the conscience of glorifying God (II Corinthians 4: 6); new creature into Christ (II Corinthians 5: 17), living into the righteousness opposed to the lawlessness (II Corinthians 6: 14), the communion with the Father and with the Son (I John 1: 2; I Corinthians 1: 9), the communion of the Holy Ghost (II Corinthians 13: 13), participating to the godlike nature (I Peter 1: 4), approaching to the Father through Christ (Ephesians

⁷⁰⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*... p. 156.

2: 18), household of God (Ephesians 2: 18), stones in the dwelling place of Christ (Ephesians 2: 21-22; I Peter 2: 5), rooted and based into the love of Christ (Ephesians 2: 18), reborn for the second time not out of corruptible seed, but from God (I Peter 1: 23; I John 3: 9), etc.”⁷¹⁰

At Baptism the man receives the grace of the Holy Ghost, which presses once forever the seal of the holiness and of the godlike lineage within the man's soul. But if the baptized one commits sin, the grace withdraws in the unknown depths of the soul, but it is never to be lost. If the man does good deeds, the grace will become increasingly shiny within him, and the man will become increasingly transparent to Christ and to the Holy Ghost, coming increasingly closer to salvation. Father Stăniloae says related to this:

*“The state of salvation is obtained by the man through grace and he develops it through deeds and through gifts within Church”*⁷¹¹. ⁷¹²

The saved man becomes in the image and in the likeness of God, and he lives into the Holy Ghost.

Father Stăniloae shows that when we are saved:

“Our body is dead in what regards the impulses towards sin, but just because of this, it is alive for the clean feelings, through the power of the Ghost, of dead and resurrected Christ, Who lives within us. This man is moved by the Ghost of Christ through his own ghost who is resurrected since now, into Christ,

⁷¹⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*... p. 156.

⁷¹¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*... p. 156.

⁷¹² Father Stăniloae presents in contrast to the Orthodox doctrine, the Catholic and the Protestant ones. Behold how his holiness describes the “granting” of the salvation within the Catholic Church: “In Catholicism, the created grace is stored in a repository, at the disposal of the Church – but not being intimately tied to the Church’s being, as mysterious body of Christ, full of the body of Christ and of Holy Ghost Who irradiates from Christ within Church and around the Church -, and therefore it was possible to be treated as a self-standing reality”.

for assimilating the righteousness which he has it from Christ.”⁷¹³

The saved one, Father Stăniloae shows:

“(...) he has Christ within himself, he has Him as living norm and source of power, and that’s why he can live a life of communion with Christ, out of the power of Christ”⁷¹⁴.

In contrast to this Orthodox vision, shows Father Stăniloae, in Protestantism:

“The salvation of the man was no longer conceived as being done through a continuous relation of the man with Christ, but through the equivalent value paid through a past act for the continuous sins of the people.”⁷¹⁵

Of course that *righteousness*, as state of the one who doesn’t commit sins, it is a symptom of the salvation, but it cannot take place outside the permanent connection with Christ, out of Whose power the man receives power for liberating himself from sin. Salvation isn’t possible outside Christ. Father Stăniloae says that:

*“The one who receives the state of righteousness through Christ, he has the power to no longer commit the sin, as didn’t have the one who was searching for his justice through the deeds of the law, namely through his own powers. (...) **Christ is within me the source of the new life**, a sinless life, for He is Himself without sin and full of the godlike life.”⁷¹⁶*

⁷¹³ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology), p. 157.

⁷¹⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)... p. 157.

⁷¹⁵ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)... p. 157.

⁷¹⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)... p. 157.

And in the same sense, his holiness shows that:

“The state of righteousness isn’t, consequently, an external gift, neither a superficial state of the man... The Savior, as Son and image of the Father, as righteousness of the Father, He has made Himself also righteousness to the man, for He elevates the man from servant, to son... Christ is, personally, the righteousness of the man, for into Him it has been given to the man that Hypostasis from before ages and uncreated”⁷¹⁷. (...) “This «righteousness» is being irradiated from the body of Christ, in all the ones who stick with Him through faith, and who use the power they receive out of this fact, to become in His image.”⁷¹⁸

Christian Orthodoxy preserves the interiority of living of Christ, as indispensable condition of the salvation. The connection of love, between the Savior and His believers, it is perpetuated within the Orthodox Church, a Church that sees Christ alive, in state of continual sacrifice, in state of uninterrupted working for man’s salvation. Christ didn’t come only for paying the man’s debt to God, for saving the honor of a God betrayed by His creature, but He has come within world and He has remained within His Church for applying the plan of God from ever, of saving the man and of deifying the creation. By analyzing the two conceptions, the juridical-Catholic one, and the one that glorifies the love of the living Christ – the Orthodox one-, Father Stăniloae shows that:

“Salvation, understood not as a justification lawfully attributed to the ones who believe in God, or being distributed by the Church out of the thesaurus of the created grace deserved by Christ, but as a new life that irradiates directly from the sanctified and resurrected body, into the limbs of the mysterious body of Christ, which is the Church, namely as effect of the personal communion of the believers with

⁷¹⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*... p. 157.

⁷¹⁸ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*... p. 158.

Christ, it is no longer a juridical, external, and static position, but a new quality in continuous development of the man.”⁷¹⁹

Within life on earth, within Church, the believers receive a foretasting of the eternal life. Here, by doing good deeds, and by working the virtues, they advance upwards towards deification, and in the life to come they will advance through epektasis, towards God. Father Stăniloae shows that through Baptism, as beginning of the salvation:

“(…) the man obtains the new life as an earnest and as a guarantee of the eternal life. If somebody dies immediately after Baptism, he will go to the eternal life. But if he lives, he will be required to develop the new life planted within him at Baptism, on one hand through the other Mysteries, and on the other hand through his own efforts. The new life given at Baptism, life extended out of Christ, through the Ghost, it has in itself, as potentialities, the supreme stages at which the man will reach in the eternal life. But the man actualizes them through a continuous moving upwardly.”⁷²⁰

At Baptism, the man enters the relation with Christ, and he receives the grace of the Holy Ghost, but he must work for voluntarily consolidating this relation, otherwise this remains a potential one, and the grace hides itself in the depths of the soul. The Baptism is the beginning of the salvation, but the salvation is a process that takes place during the whole life of the believer, and it requests the believer to work out of his whole soul, out of his whole heart, with the whole his power, and out of his whole thought, for obtaining the followings:

“But the content of this plan regarding us and the power available to us into Christ, the One dwelling through Baptism within us, it is actualized, it is unveiled, it is assimilated by us in a gradual moving, in which we must use in fact the power offered us,

⁷¹⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*... p. 158.

⁷²⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*... p. 158.

which actualizes and increases also our power, gradually. That's why, concretely, we effect an advancing, even if we will do this in what is virtually planted within us.”⁷²¹

Baptism, as first phase of the believer's initiation in the Holy Mystery of Christ and of His Church, it establishes the final purpose of the man and it confers the man the possibility of salvation, but the man, for being saved, he must work in continuation, in the bosom of the Church, helped by the receiving of the Holy Mysteries, for bettering himself permanently and maximally, as much as it is possible to him:

“(...) through Baptism, Christ dwells within us, with everything that His “mind” comprises regarding the target He wants to take us to. Only because in the grace given us through Baptism there is Christ Himself as Person with the whole endlessness comprised by Him as Person, that's why nothing is added to us after Baptism, but it is only actualized, due to our efforts. Of course, in Eucharist the whole Same Christ gives Himself to us also in another way, for penetrating us also with His sacrificed body and soul.”⁷²²

And, about the moment when the man reaches at salvation, we believe together with the Church's Holy Fathers that, within world, we are only running towards this target, towards salvation, but it is necessary that this running to be a continuous effort, because by ceasing thi run, we fall again into sins. Apostle Paul himself, quoted by Father Stăniloae, said about the fact of reaching salvation, of being saved, that: *“Not that I have already achieved the correction, or that I am consummate; but I aim to catch it, for I was also caught by Christ Jesus. // Brothers, I do not reckon to have conquered it yet, // But I do this one: by forgetting about the things from behind me, and tending towards the things from ahead, I am*

⁷²¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*... p. 158.

⁷²² Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*... p. 158.

running to the target, to the reward of the calling from above, of God, into Christ Jesus”⁷²³.

Father Stăniloae describes the state of righteousness reached by the ones who remain and work for their salvation in the relation of love with Christ, as:

“The state of righteousness, which will culminate in state of glory, it is the right state of the man. As culminant state of glory, it has been shown plainly, for the first time, on the face of Christ the Man. And through the direct relation with Him, by looking at Him, it gradually reflects on the faces of all the ones who look at Him, and who show their love by working His commandments. It is no longer covered to them, or not-communicated to them, as it has been covered by a veil on the face of Moses. It is really incorporated in Christ the Man and, that’s why, it is communicated. For God Himself entered through Christ in direct relation with us and He no longer scares us by His distance. The Glory of God shown on the face of Christ it is the endless love of God, love entered in direct relation with us, come amongst us, with its supreme descent. Any person will communicate to the ones he enters in relation with, if it is truly living, a certain glory and power. Christ’s glory, communicated to us, the ones who are in relation with Him, it is endless and it doesn’t scare us, but it manifests a great intimacy towards us. The ones who look at Christ and who insist in communion with Him, they are becoming increasingly «righteous», increasingly imprinted by the glory of Christ, and by Christ Himself as example.”⁷²⁴

⁷²³ Philippians 3: 12-14. In KJB we have: “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. // Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, // I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

⁷²⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*... p. 159.

Father Stăniloae shows that in the full freedom given us by God, there is the possibility for us choosing the good, but also the evil. But for being saved, we must work the good for appropriating it, and for being us elevated spiritually increasingly higher, towards Christ:

“Whether God is always in the absolute consummation, or in the endless love due to the not-changeability of His nature, our created nature, instead, it can move, due to its changeability, both to evil or to good, or from evil to good, or to even more evil, as also from good to even more good. And we cannot be immutable, but only in the sense that we move ourselves only into good and towards the highest stairs of the good. On this way, we can be imparted also by this immutability of the movement ever further into good, and in this sense we are also partakers to infinity. And, actually, towards this one our nature asks itself, and through this one our nature is authentically realized. This is the movement conform to our nature, for it increasingly unites us with the model of our nature, with the Logos become man, the most realized man in the fullest conformity to the godlike Logos, with its Logos. And within our aspiration to endlessly advance in good, or in love, there is again hidden the mystery of our connection with God, the One Who calls us to advance within the infinity of His love.”⁷²⁵

Father Stăniloae shows again that salvation is not possible outside the Church. We must search for Christ where He is, and to receive Him how He is and how He reveals Himself to us. By searching for Him outside the Church, or by trying to find Him “in our terms”, it is a manifestation of the autonomous vain glory:

*“Advancing towards the increasingly full likeness to Christ, it can’t be done **but within Church**, for through the Church one can see “the wisdom of many*

⁷²⁵ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*... p. 160.

kinds, of God, according to the decision from ever, which He has unveiled it into Christ Jesus, our Lord (Ephesians 3: 10-11). This is because within Church, there is actualized, in the multitude of the teachings, of the prayers, and of its members, the multitude of powers, of works, and of forms of the love of God, each individual learns and takes advice from this multiplicity. Therefore, if the Church is the Body of Christ, and the Head is Christ, He shaping the face of the Church by His features, maybe that's why by looking at these features, the friends of the Lamb have taken strength, because they see limpidly, through it, the unseen One. This is because as the ones who aren't able to look at the circle of the sun, they look at it through the limpidity of the water, so also those ones, by looking as in a clean mirror to the face of the Church, they see the Sun of the righteousness, known through what it is seen.”⁷²⁶

Church isn't a deserted by God house, “remained after” the life of Christ on earth. The Church, the laboratory we are being saved in, it is the living presence of Christ, in His quality of Head of the Church. The Church is working through the Holy Ghost and into the Holy Ghost, impregnated by the omnipresence of Christ God:

Within Church all these things are being seen not statically and not in an external examination, but Christ Himself relives them continuously within Church, implying the Church to relive them, by imprinting Himself in the Church and in the Church's believers, as limbs of His body, and through this imprinting within them the mode of relieving the states through which He elevated His assumed human nature. The Church is the communitarian human environment Christ relives in, together with it, His savior action, and the environment within any of His limbs is on another stair of the climbing, but in the Same Christ, Who has descended Himself to each

⁷²⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)...* p. 160.

human individual's level. By being One and the Same, Christ keeps everybody in unity and communion, but each individual lives Him at different height, though all the stairs are expressed in the same words of the teaching, in the same sanctifying acts, and in the same prayers. Each one takes power in his ascension from everybody, some of them receiving from the superior ones, knowledge and example, the others exercising themselves in the communion with others in serving and humbleness. This is for **no one reckons himself as reached at the target** and everyone reckons the difference between stairs as insignificant, in comparison to the infinite height of the target.”⁷²⁷

The salvation is a process of man's transformation, process that cannot be approached only by a cold rationality. This process of advancing towards Christ it requires to be traveled with the love for God the Word, Who sacrificed Himself, for us to be saved. Father Stăniloae shows that:

“(...) in the relation with the supreme Person of the Word, become a close man, one cannot progress but advancing in the relation of love with the community of the believers, within which Christ is dwelling as in His body, by strengthening this body's unity. The plenary humanity, or plenary deified into Christ, being the humanity opened at maximum to everybody, we have through it access and power of access to everybody's humanity, but also vice versa, through everybody's humanity seen in unity, and loved, we also have access to that full of Godhead humanity of Christ, within which everybody's humanity is comprised. The advancing in His humanity it is done infinitely, for through it one advances into the godlike infinite light and love; and by advancing into these, it increases in them our humanity itself.”⁷²⁸

⁷²⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*... pp. 160-161.

⁷²⁸ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*... p. 161.

Our spiritual climbing towards God it is accompanied also by His descent towards us, towards the ones who strive to walk the narrow path:

“The One Who loves the people who are in difficulties and, in a narrow understanding, He descends at their level, communicating them summarizing sketches out of the richness of His wisdom, and striving Himself together with them under their burdens, to not spare them from efforts which strengthen them, but also not to let them succumb under these burdens, in this manner, He climbs together with them. This is because if He spares them of difficulties, without their striving, they won’t have the occasion to grow up through them; and whether they wouldn’t reach at the superior understanding being helped by His participation to their troubles, they wouldn’t fortify their mind towards the real understanding of His loving Person, and they wouldn’t understand all the motives and the whole depth of His love.”⁷²⁹

The phase of preparing the salvation, as it is shown by its name, it is the phase during which there are produced within man the conditions **to die to himself and to resurrect to Christ**. Some Holy Fathers, as Diadochus of Photice, quoted by Father Stăniloae, they delimitate between the works of the grace from before Baptism and from after Baptism, by saying that before Baptism the grace would influence the man from outside man’s soul, and after Baptism it would become interior to the soul. After Baptism the grace strengthens the man, making him able to work the good deeds, to open himself to Christ and to work His commandments.

Preparation for salvation it plows the soul, and makes it propitious for receiving and for nourishing, through good deeds, the seeds of the grace, for these ones to become towering trees, in which the spiritual birds of the heavens to

⁷²⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*... p. 161.

nest⁷³⁰. And these towering trees, when they root strongly in the soul of the right-worshipper and right-working one, they can no longer be uprooted by the worldly storms.

By celebrating the Mystery of the Baptism upon believer, Christ comes within him, and destroys the ancestral sin and eliminates the sinful state from before, and makes to Himself a dwelling place in the soul of the baptized man. Father Stăniloae shows that:

*“This spiritual event takes place through the Mystery of the Baptism and it is equivalent to man’s entering the mysterious body of Christ, namely the Church. It consists, on one hand, of abolishment of the ancestral sin and of the other sins committed out of the weakness generated by the power of the ancestral sin; on the other hand, out of the dwelling of Christ or of His grace within the soul, that is equivalent to the beginning of a new life within man; the walls of the spiritual prison have been crumbled down, and he has entered the circuit of the endless love of Christ, manifested in the communion of the Church. Now the Ghost of Christ has been intimately introduced in the human subject, with His work, so that the human subject feels the impulse towards the union with Christ, in love, and towards the good deeds, as his own impulse, though this impulse comes from Christ; and the contrary temptation it is felt like stirred up before the soul by an unseen enemy.”*⁷³¹

Baptism is “*the good beginning*” laid to the man’s new life, life he is being born within, through Baptism in Christ.

⁷³⁰ Matthew 13: 31-32: ROB: “Another parable He laid before them, by saying: The Kingdom of Heavens is like a grain of mustard, which the man took and sowed in his field, // and which is smaller than all the seeds, but when it has grown up it is larger than all the vegetables and it becomes tree, so that the birds of the sky come and dwell on his branches”; KJB: “Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: // Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.”

⁷³¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)...* p. 161.

The seal of the Holy Ghost becomes a shield against the attacks of the cunning one, and against committing sins in the future.

Consequently to Baptism, there aren't though removed the irreproachable passions: the hunger, the thirst, the tiredness, the cold, which remain gates for reproachable passions' entering: of laziness, of covetousness, of cowardice, etc. For removing even the tendency of still committing evil deeds, the believer must engage himself in an always ascendant effort towards Christ, called by Father Stăniloae as: **"the progress into holiness"**⁷³². The weapons, and in the same time the support of the man on the way that leads to salvation, are the Holy Mysteries officiated within the savior laboratory of the Church. By participating to the celebration of the Mysteries, we fight for increasingly weakening the passions, so that to reach at the rational image of our nature from before the proto-parents' fall:

*"The fight for weakening them (the passions, o. n.), it is equal to the action for the fully personalizing and rationalizing the nature, after the first affirmation of the person took place at Baptism. That's why the liberation from the ancestral sin isn't done for all the descendants of the baptized one, because there it is required a beginning of person' affirmation, of personal option for being elevated above the ancestral sin, as sub-personal and counter-personal state. The fight in communion against the weaknesses of the nature which to lead to sin, it is a strengthening in continuation of the man's personal character. **Personal, but not individual**, because the last one it represents also a subduing of the man towards the pleasures and the sub-personal and anti-communitarian pride."*⁷³³

Father Stăniloae reiterates and accentuates his holiness doctrine regarding the personalism of the relations established between the saved one and its Savior. The one who is saved, he

⁷³² Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*... p. 162.

⁷³³ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*... p. 162.

receives God the Word as Person, as Hypostasis of God, and he fights with all his determination to realize Him within himself, for his soul to become a part of the Kingdom of Heavens:

“But this action of personalizing it means an increasingly imprinting of the Christ’s Hypostasis into man’s person. Through this, the human subject becomes fully opened to other subjects, so as Christ, by having His human nature into the Hypostasis of the Word, He is fully opened to the other human persons not only as God, but also as man. Thus, by full participation to Christ, the man becomes fully a person, namely a fully communitarian being liberated from the prison of the egotistical passions. So as by the dwelling of Christ with His clean human nature within man, on the basis of the man’s consent, it took place the cleaning of the man of the egotism of the ancestral sin and of the other sins, and the beginning of the action of man’s communitarian personalizing action, so the personal union in continuation of the man with that Christ Who dwells within man, it causes an increasingly full man’s nature personalizing, imprinted by the Christ’s Person. This makes Christ transparent through the human nature and, more precisely, through the person who bears this human nature.”⁷³⁴

At Father Stăniloae we have encountered for the first time such a trenchant definition of the godlike grace as the one that follows:

“The Grace is the Person of Christ Himself, Who stays in our intimacy, available with the whole His love, but Who waits for us to also open ourselves to this love, to start the dialogue of love and to start filling ourselves up with His kindness.”⁷³⁵

⁷³⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*... p. 162.

⁷³⁵ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*... p. 163.

By receiving This One, and by working His commandments, by the kindness and by the will of God, we reach to be saved.

Through His savior work, Christ creates the symbol of love through which the human persons to come to Him and to be saved. Christ's sacrifice on cross and the state of continual sacrifice He is in, it calls us gently to open our souls for accepting to walk the way to salvation. Father Stăniloae shows that Christ's savior work is complete, not being left anything outside:

*"Christ has done everything to enter the dialogue of love with us. He dwells in the altar of our being, bringing Himself, as Hierarch, as sacrifice to the heavenly Father, for us, to strengthen us on an unknown way, for us to join the sacrifice of our being to His sacrifice, to renounce also us to ourselves for entering the dialog with the Father through Him, as He entered this dialogue, through His sacrifice, as man, with the Father and with us. His humbleness must be answered by our humbleness, for realizing the mystery of encountering Him into love."*⁷³⁶

Christ sits on the right hand of the Father and calls us to Him. Salvation means to answer this calling, to strive ourselves going towards Him, ending to remove even the memory of the sin from within our being. Father Stăniloae highlights, repeatedly, the great love Christ has for the ones whom He calls to salvation, for He calls them in the most inner Mystery of the consummate holiness, that is, mysteriously, in the same time, the depth of our soul:

"The place where He is as Hierarch, it is the most inner room, the most hidden, and the most clean one of the heart, for only that one can be the most easily sensitized and opened to God. Only the virtual

⁷³⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*... p. 163.

human depth can be opened to the endless godlike depth.”⁷³⁷

Christ is Hierarch in the Church of our soul, and He celebrates the Holy Liturgy of our salvation in The Holy of Holies of this Church. Behold how Father Stăniloae describes the state of salvation into Christ:

“But myself I am Christ. He has made Himself the Subject from within my subject, without ceasing me to be subject within Him, but by seeing myself fulfilled within Him, and full of joy for this fulfilling. He has become subject to me, by remaining, in the same time You, the most responsible You for me. This framing of mine, as subject, within Christ the subject, being the act of the supreme love, it is in the same time the act of the fullest opening of the heart, of my intimacy, through which I am elevating my life, when I gather myself together from the self-forgetfulness, and from self-scattering. The heart is destined to be opened towards God as Person and towards people, as it is also made for being an open mirror towards the seen things. This opening of the heart for me and for Christ started at Baptism, by banishing away the sticking to the sin of the egotism that I believed my own self is affirmed within. By being my dialogical subject fitted within Christ’s subject, my heart opens within Christ’s human heart, maximally open to the infinity of God.”⁷³⁸

No believer can, by himself, to affirm, at any moment of the spiritual climbing, that he has been saved. On the contrary, the ones who come closer to salvation they have the acute conscience of the fact that they haven’t yet been saved, that “**they haven’t even started yet**” to be saved, as a Saint Father of the wilderness used to say. They see, with the eyes of the Ghost, the endless deep of the virtues and the impossibility

⁷³⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*... p. 163.

⁷³⁸ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*... p. 165.

of ever reaching at fully realizing a certain virtue. But the virtues are so tightly tied together, that, by obtaining a certain stage in working one of them, it implies, mysteriously, obtaining in some measure all the other virtues, for all of them spring out of the love for Christ.

Father Stăniloae reminds that the man is priest in his soul's church, where Christ is Hierarch within, and that the man must relentlessly work the liturgy of bringing himself as sacrifice on the altar of the love of God:

*"This is the importance of man's ministration as priest. Only on this way the man can bring himself clean to Christ: if he brings all his thoughts, regarding all things, from the beginning, to Christ, for the Great Hierarch to bring these thoughts to the Father, sanctifying them."*⁷³⁹

The salvation as process of ascending towards God by working the virtues, it brings with itself the knowledge of God, for that soul, that has been spiritualized and has been made transparent to the Ghost, it becomes capable of spiritual vision:

*"Thus the man's heart opens itself to God through a love, that it is not only the top of the virtues, but also of knowing God, being the appanage of the mind that has been cleaned of passions. Besides, the virtues, by cleaning the body and the soul of passions, and by filling it up with the love for God, they clean up, in the same time, the mind, of the passionate cogitation, which deforms the things and the persons, and it closes them in a narrow horizon; the virtues elevate the mind through the wide and luminous horizon - the mind sees the things and the persons within - to the knowledge of God."*⁷⁴⁰

Father Stăniloae shows that by progressing on the way of salvation we start knowing the simple rationalities of God

⁷³⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*... p. 165.

⁷⁴⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*... p.166.

from within things and creatures, the stage we reach at when, by the love of God, we are elevated above the immediate worldly, above the immanent as spirit's prison:

*"This clean knowledge of the simple rationalities of the creatures, which are simple and though endlessly deep, it is the fruit of a love that is superior to living them out of a passing material interest. **Even the love for woman, that exceeds sensuality, it is a superior love, for it is durable, by loving and respecting the woman in her eternal mystery and in her not-narrowed spiritual dimensions, which one can know through this clean love into God.** In this sense, for the ones advanced into Christ, there is no longer man (for the woman) and woman (for the man), but all of them are one into Christ (Galileans 3: 28), for the man and the woman encounter one another in their spirit, that is identical in its depths and cleanliness."*⁷⁴¹

The endless ascension towards the personal salvation, it brings benefits also to the Church's entire community, for being us within Church next to the ones who relentlessly ascend on the way towards consummation, we can use, if we want to, their sacrifice, and to be "irradiated" by their power, which is received from above, and which helps them and it can help us to strive on the way towards salvation:

"(...) ascension within consummation is endless, and nobody can say that he has passed beyond his consummation, so that what he does in addition to that it is no longer assimilated to his person, but it isn't an abundance that he can give to the Church, for the Church putting it at the disposal of the ones who haven't accomplished as much as they ought to. This doesn't mean egotism of the ones who ascend to very high stairs of consummation. But others' profit from them it is due to the direct irradiation of power from the most elevated ones to the less elevated

⁷⁴¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*... p.166.

ones, not being needed an official intermediary to take this surplus in own administration, for distributing it to others as some merits untied from the persons who have earned them. Besides, all Christians can gain ones from others; each of them has something to communicate to and to receive from the others.”⁷⁴²

Father Stăniloae highlights the importance of the good deeds the believers must do, in order of their salvation. Considering, as the Protestants do, that Christ paid, once for all, the juridical debt to the Father, and there is no longer needed that, the believer as individual person, to work the good things in order of his own salvation, we believe that it is equivalent to depriving, the one who adheres to such a doctrine, of the possibility of being saved. Father Stăniloae shows that the deeds which save us are:

*“(…) the deeds which spring out of the power of Christ, the One dwelling inside us, they are necessary for personally achieving the salvation, for they increase within us the union with Christ and the likeness to Him. **In them it is shown that we have achieved the salvation into Christ.**”⁷⁴³*

Faith urges us to do good deeds, and the good deeds we do are the witness of our faith, and in the same time they increase our faith by the help received from Christ. **Faith without deeds is barren, and it is an abomination before God, because it shows Him as He is not, lying about Him:**

“Between these deeds and the faith in Christ, there is an organic connection, both of them being manifested in the communion with Christ. By doing good deeds, the communion with Christ is manifested as a development of the beginner communion through faith. The faith into Christ is faith in that Christ from within us, the faith from His power, He being within

⁷⁴² Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*... p. 166.

⁷⁴³ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*... p. 167.

us; it is the irradiation within us of the presence and of the work of God, dwelling within us in an unseen way. This faith includes in itself also the love for the One Who sacrificed Himself, resurrected for us, and Who is dwelling within us, for out of His state of sacrifice, to be us able to take to die to the sin and to live a new life out of Him and with Him. Christ Himself fills us up with love for Him, through His love for us. And this love gives us the power to become like Him: to die to the sin, and to manifest ourselves with love towards anybody and anything. **Christendom is the great Mystery of the personal communion, which the Occident hasn't understood.** It is the great Mystery of the person from within other's person life, and, ultimately, from within the Person of Christ full of the godlike infinity.”⁷⁴⁴

The superior power leading us on the way of the salvation is the love of God. Like the Holy Saints of the Church shows, until we are working the salvation due to fear, or for reward, we are only hirelings. But when we start ascending towards God for our totally disinterested love we have for Him, due to that great love that “casts the fear out”, then we become sons of Him and He adopts us with godlike joyfulness:

“Love is the biggest force. But it is very strong only when it is sustained by the communion with the infinite Person, in the power and in the love of Christ, which are the same with the true faith. Love remains also after the faith will cease, namely after Christ will shows Himself to us in an unveiled way. And because love is great, it is working, namely it shows its capacity to be proven through all manifestations. **Therefore, the one who has faith but has no love, even if he could move the mountains, of even if he would give his body**

⁷⁴⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*... p. 167.

to the burnt, there will be nothing, for he is not in communion. ”⁷⁴⁵ ⁷⁴⁶ 746

Father Stăniloae shows that **one cannot speak about faith into Christ without speaking about love for Christ**, and the one who loves Christ he has, towards the ascension to salvation, all the manifestations Saint Apostle Paul attributes to love:

*“Faith into Christ is love for Christ, and impropriating Christ’s love for people. Otherwise, that faith isn’t true. This is because the true faith is itself the beginning of this opening and trust into infinity of Christ’s love. Luther contested the love’s importance, for love would be of the man and therefore the man will be proud of it. But the man, he was saying, he mustn’t give anything to keep his faith that he is saved only through Christ. But **the one who truly loves, he isn’t proud, for he has forgotten about himself. The ones who loves Christ, and into Christ he loves the people, he is not haughty, for he knows that his love is nourished from Christ’s love for us**, and that into the infinity of the love he is conquered by, he lives the infinity of Christ’s love. Our love is only our answer to His love, given from the power of His love. It is a wave of our being, towards Him, arisen by the wave of His love, which drags us towards Him. **If there wasn’t His love** which to penetrate inside us and to attract us*

⁷⁴⁵ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)… p. 167.

⁷⁴⁶ Father Stăniloae quotes Saint Apostle Paul (I Corinthians 13: 4-7): “Love is long suffering, love is full of kindness, love doesn’t envy, doesn’t praise itself, isn’t haughty, love doesn’t behave indecently, it doesn’t search for its things, it doesn’t get lit with anger, it doesn’t count evilness, it doesn’t rejoice of injustice, but it rejoices of truth; it suffer everything, it believes everything, it hopes everything, it endures all things.”; in KJB we have: “Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, // Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; // Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; // Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.”

towards Him, we would behave ourselves as some insensitive ones. **We wouldn't have even been able at least to believe.**”⁷⁴⁷

Father Stăniloae draws our attention upon the fact that the deeds, even being good, they do not automatically have a savior character, because the deeds done outside the love for Christ they remain without influence upon personal salvation:

“(...) the deeds which aren't out of the faith of Christ, they don't have value for salvation, likewise either the faith that isn't working through love it isn't true faith. That's why the deeds aren't reckoned savior through themselves, aren't reckoned as such the deeds which have only an external image, and they do not constitute as such a right of the man to salvation; that's why the good deeds cannot be either a performance that exceeds the equivalent of the own salvation, being thus possible that deeds to be detached from the one who did them and stored in a thesaurus of surplus, out of which the shortcomings of other people can be compensated. There can be done deeds at exterior, and the soul still to remain lacked of love, rigid into his pride for the committed deeds. There can be done deeds, out of diverse interests, with diverse plans. But only the overflowing of the heart within deeds⁷⁴⁸, out of the faith as unmediated relation with Christ, it gives them savior value; and only when the good deeds increase the faith and the love of the man whom they make increasingly better; and only when the good deeds transfer the kindness of the one who commit them also within the being of the one who enjoys the benefits of the good deeds done to him. Thus, if the addressee of some good deeds feels some pride within the one who does those deeds in his favor, this fact may determine him to be even more evil.”⁷⁴⁹

⁷⁴⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)… p. 168.

⁷⁴⁸ We encounter here, again, a very powerful metaphor, used by Father Stăniloae for increasing the eloquence of his sayings.

⁷⁴⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)… p. 169.

Christ comes close to us into love, a love which, if we want to be saved, we will answer with love and with good deeds. God wants, out of His most-good love for people, to save us, but He doesn't do it by force, or automatically; He asks us to answer Him, in exchange for our salvation, with love. Behold what Father Stăniloae says about this fact:

*"On one hand love is a gift, and on the other hand, it must be received and impropriated actively by us, and shown through deeds. We cannot remain passive, insensitive to this love. We cannot be saved without our active answer to the love of God for us, as some "logs", as Luther was saying. God doesn't despise us so much so to move us in the kingdom of heavens as on some insensitive objects. **If He had despised us so much, he wouldn't have made Himself man for us.** And then, this insensitivity wouldn't be prolonged also into insensitivity to the happiness of the eternal life? Because how will be God then able, suddenly, to produce sensitiveness within us, if there hasn't started to be produce within us, since now, an effort to achieve this sensibility by ourselves?⁷⁵⁰"*

Advancing on the stairs towards salvation, it is an evolutionary process, within which there takes place a two-ways exchange between believer and God, for the working love for God, it gives birth, out of the love for people of God, even to more love, even to more good deeds:

*"Through the deeds sprung out of love, which at its turn grows out of the love of Christ as man towards His Father, and out of His love towards us, our nature advances from the quality of **image on the stairs of the likeness to God**, together with Christ as man and likewise to Him, Who for this **has taken***

⁷⁵⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)...*
p. 169.

***our nature and, through this He has laid down
a basis for our salvation.***⁷⁵¹

As we give more love to God, we receive the gift of being able to love Him even more, ascending in quality of sons, towards Him, on the path of salvation.

⁷⁵¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*... p. 170.

EPILOGUE

Father Stăniloae's theological work is that of one who lived with the deed the things he wrote / uttered. Spiritual heights his holiness reached at, they can be perceived also in the high spiritualizing of the language he used. **In his writings the language passes beyond letter⁷⁵² and ends to suggest, to highlight, to express realities which, generally, are impossible to be expressed by cataphatic language. Father Stăniloae is creator of theological language**, demarche he is supported in by his immense erudition, by his unmatched capacity of using the rhetorical means. His holiness uses a wide range of tropes, from comparison and metaphor, to aphaeresis, anaphora⁷⁵³, apothegm, chiasm, paradox, prolepsis, and so on, culminating with rhetorical catachresis.

There are some concepts which constitute the backbone of Father Stăniloae's theology, amongst which we believe the most important would be: **communion, person, love, and salvation within and through Church**. These notions are transposed in the myriads of nuances which make the theological affirmations of Father Stăniloae so effective.

In the work of Father Stăniloae it is shown the fact that Church does its savior work, upon individual, upon family, and upon society in general, by working the Holy Mysteries in the presence of Christ and of the Holy Ghost. Church is a living organism, always actual, whose teaching and practice prepare the believers as in a holy laboratory, for the Kingdom of God.

The notion of Church, at Father Stăniloae, it has sometimes "unusual" meanings, for his holiness adds to the usual meanings: of assembly of the believers, or of spatially delimitated dwelling place for cult, of summoned people, of Body of Christ, of bride of Christ, he also confers to the Church meanings as: creation, family, and man. Respectively, his holiness speaks about: creation as Church of God, within

⁷⁵² One can see in the sense, as an example from philosophy, Heidegger, *Searching for Art Work*, especially the end part of the mentioned book.

⁷⁵³ Here with the meaning of rhetorical process, through which the ideas expressed before are reiterated, with the intention of strengthen their influence upon the reader and for highlighting new valences. We mention this for avoiding the confusion with the term *anaphora*, identically spelled, used for naming the leavened bread imparted at the end of the Liturgy.

which the Liturgy is officiated by the presence of God, through the divine uncreated energies; by the family as church that prolongs the received grace within world; and Father Stăniloae says about the human soul, that the soul has the grace of the Holy Ghost within, since Baptism, and thus takes place the self-sacrifice of the man, by dying to the sin, and by resurrecting – through totally surrendering himself - to Christ.

The Church is a burning pyre, lit by Christ, spreading its fire all over the world, and deifying this world, and bringing this world, sanctified, back to its Creator. The Church has two sides, but which are not separated, namely that one existing in immanent, and the one existing into transcendent. The Church from within world, formed by believers, it is the seen Body of Christ, but it continues into heavens with the saints and with the angels of God.

When speaking about Church, Father Stăniloae remains always within the borders of Church's unity and universality, and his holiness has very clear conceptions regarding how these unity and universality are being achieved. Concerning the respective notions, his holiness enounces the requirement of a correct ecumenism, which to not be Unionism at all costs, which to lead to diminishing or distorting the teaching of faith.

Father Stăniloae shows that Revelation remains always alive and present within Church, as Christ and the Holy Ghost are always present and working within Church for humans' salvation. Creation is being approach, by the Church, in dynamic, with the constantly renewed means of the human knowledge, but in the constant presence of the same truth of faith.

Through Baptism, Anointment, and Eucharist, man enters – is initiated – the Church of Christ, and then, during the whole his life, he comes, again and again, in the presence of Christ, and under the irradiation of the Holy Ghost. The Mysteries, as Father Stăniloae shows, are officiated in seen manner by priests and bishops; and in unseen way by the Holy Ghost in the presence of Christ. Father Stăniloae in his writings situates, very clearly and unequivocally, the role of the priest and of the bishop, in celebrating the Mysteries. Priest and bishop, they are the representatives of Christ, but they are by no means His locum tenens. A particular nuance is discerned by Father Stăniloae when he affirms that in the moment when being imparted with the Most-Precious Body

and with the Most-Holy Blood of Christ, priest and bishop, they become again simple believers, for they are in the presence of the Emperor Christ.

Church's work as laboratory of salvation is carried on through the totality of Its activities, activities which constitute Church's cult. This permanent work of the Church, Its cult, it has as purpose to bring all the people to Christ, to the right-faith, in order to save them.

The cross is reflected, in a substantial manner, in the work of Father Stăniloae, who finds very diverse significations to the cross. The cross, as seal, as sign of the Kingdom, is in the same time a sign of the sacrifice of Christ for us, and of bringing ourselves as living sacrifices before the Father, through Jesus Christ, into the Holy Ghost.

The human being is seen by Father Stăniloae as Church within which the Holy Liturgy is being officiated by the human person, through unconditional and permanent surrender to Christ the Lord. His holiness grants the man the status of Church - the Kingdom of God being extended into world by being received in the believers' souls, and by being the creation deified by believers.

Communion and love are indispensable to salvation and Father Stăniloae considers them as vehicles which carry the human being towards salvation. Communion is seen in all its aspects, amongst believers as human persons in interpersonal interaction and tension, but also between believers and Jesus Christ, through the Holy Ghost, and with the Father, the human being nature adopted, through the ascent of Christ with the body, to heavens. The Church, laboratory of our salvation, it is considered by Father Stăniloae as a dwelling place of a large communion of the believers with Christ.

As **practical algorithm of salvation**, as **guidance for salvation**, Father Stăniloae presents, in his writings, the stages the believers must fulfill in order to be saved within Church. His holiness defines the preparation of the man for being saved, as gaining the righteousness as man's permanent state, so that the grace of the Holy Ghost to be maximally actualized in him and for Christ to come and dwell within man. The man becomes spiritualized and transparent to Christ and to the Holy Ghost. Out of man and within man, one can see the work of the Divine Persons of the Holy Trinity.

The theological discourse of Father Stăniloae uses the methods of logical and philosophical demonstration when expressing the truth of faith. He uses, due to his holiness great erudition, arguments taken from history, philosophy, sociology, and psychology, and even from literature, proving a wide spiritual vision, anchored in the reality of the daily life⁷⁵⁴.

The writings of Father Stăniloae aren't only theoretical and dry reasoning and argumentations, but they always approach a certain theme by **highlighting very clear practical implications**, being always connected to the way we must walk, within and through Church, towards salvation. His holiness's work has a permanent apologetic character, especially concerning the clear character of the Orthodoxy against the fallings and the excesses of the Catholicism and of the Protestantism.

Father Stăniloae's capacity to utter kerugmatik judgments (kerugma) it proves the very high level of his holiness's theology and the spiritual impropriation of the faith he reached.

In conclusion we can affirm that the work of Priest Professor PhD Academician Dumitru Stăniloae is a complete and superior catechism of the Christian Orthodoxy. He approached in his work all the aspects of the Orthodox faith with the surety and with the amplitude of the one who is inspired from above. Out of the style of the dialogue and out of the affirmations he utters, one can deduce the high level of impropriation of the Christian doctrine, a doctrine that, being helped by his great culture and spirituality, he expressed it in a personal, vivid, and sometimes surprising manner, a complex one, but being by no means prolix. We believe that Father Stăniloae had the necessary gifts of founding a theological "school", but the vicissitudes of the communist regime, the fear of the ones who rejected his teachings due to the fear about repercussion, led to an under appreciation and to an insufficient valuing of his holiness's work.

Through everything he affirms it can be seen at Father Stăniloae, the solid foundation of the Orthodox Church's dogmas. Everything his holiness says it is based on the solid foundation of the right-faith and the wine of his holiness's

⁷⁵⁴ A se vedea de exemplu: Dumitru Stăniloae, „Comunitate prin iubire”, *Ortodoxia*, no. 1 / 1963, p. 58-60.

teaching it is made out of the grapes grown on the apostolic vine.

And yes, salvation is still possible. And it will be forever and ever possible, by the will of God!

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